

# TIVERTON ALMSHOUSE TRUST RESIDENTS' HANDBOOK



December 2022



**TIVERTON ALMSHOUSE TRUST**

**RESIDENTS' HANDBOOK  
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## Chapter One

### The History of the Trust

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#### Almshouses

Almshouses are dwellings originally provided by a benefactor for specific groups of people. These days most almshouses are run as charitable organisations and are often governed according to a deed or legal document specific to that particular organisation. Residents occupy their homes under licence and pay a contribution to maintenance and upkeep.

Tiverton Almshouse Trust owns eighty-three almshouses as well as investment property consisting of housing for private rental and commercial property including shops, offices and the historic Market Housing (courtesy of benefactor, Walter Tyrell), where the Trust is based.

Many almshouses have a long history and Tiverton Almshouse Trust is no exception dating back to about 1520 and three benefactors in particular.

#### **John Greenway (c 1460 – 1529)**

John Greenway was the first great Tiverton merchant, exporting West Country cloth in the late 1400s. He had a fleet of ships, armed to protect sailors from pirates, and was one of the first merchants outside London to be admitted to the Drapers Company and the Merchant Venturers Company, in London.

John Greenway employed staff and trained apprentices. In order to house five poor men who could no longer work for him, he provided the original almshouses and chapel on Gold Street in the 1520s. Each man received eight pence per week and, in return, had to pray daily for the souls of John Greenway and his wife, Joan. An inscription instructing this practice can still be seen on the chapel. At around the time the chapel was built, John Greenway's property was assessed at £200 making him the richest man in Tiverton.

Throughout history many additional units have been built at John Greenway Close notably in Victorian times and again in 2004 when thirty-two homes were built to a design by the Trust's architect, David Yarham. In 2005 these almshouses were opened by Prince Charles, who awarded them the Patron's Award for design excellence.

#### **John Waldron (c 1520 – 1579)**

John Waldron is the founder of the original almshouses and chapel in Wellbrook Street (now known as Greenway Gardens) originally for eight poor men. The building was started in 1579 but John Waldron died before the work was completed and his wife, Ricord, ensured the project was completed.

A prosperous local merchant, Tiverton-born John Waldron is believed to have bought the bell that hangs above the roof of the chapel while on his travels abroad. The bell dates back to 1539 and it is believed to be the oldest bell in Devon that bears an inscription. It was cast by Aelbert Hackman, a famous bell founder, in Cleve, West Germany.

The friezes carved on the ornate stonework of the chapel show the ships that John Waldron used for trading and many images of his travels, including an elephant. It is believed that the alms originally given to the inhabitants of Waldron's almshouses came from the Manor of Daccomb near Paignton and not from land or property owned by John Waldron in Tiverton.

Between 1950 – 1970, further almshouses were built on the garden behind the original building. There are now forty-three almshouses at Greenway Gardens.

### **George Slee**

George Slee was a farmer's son from Coldridge, believed to have moved to Tiverton in the late 1500s. He became a prominent merchant-clothier and in 1603 built the Great Housing on Angel Terrace at the top of Angel Hill. Slee imported exotic goods from the Americas and West Africa and in 1590 he was recorded as importing 74lbs (about 30 kilos) of 'elephant teeth' (ivory).

The Great Housing was destroyed by fire in 1598 and George Slee's daughter died in the blaze. He built the almshouses next door in her memory. Originally intended for six, poor, aged widows or maidens, today the building Housings three one-bedroom flats. George Slee, like John Waldron, died before his almshouses were completed and his widow, Joan, has dated the building with her initials and an inscription '1614'.

## Chapter Two

### Governance & Management

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#### Regulatory Bodies

Tiverton Almshouse Trust is a registered charity and a registered provider of social housing. As such it is regulated by two separate bodies: the Charity Commission and the Regulator of Social Housing.

#### Governance

The Trust is governed by a Scheme produced by the Charity Commission in September 2009 (amended in 2014). There is one corporate trustee which is a company limited by guarantee known as Tiverton Almshouse Trustee Ltd and within that company there are voluntary Directors. The Directors are responsible for governance matters and meet on a quarterly basis. There are sub-committees that meet more regularly, usually on a six-week basis.

In addition to the almshouses, the Trust owns investment property: shops and offices within Tiverton and residential dwellings that are rented out on shorthold assured tenancies (not almshouses).

#### Management

The Chief Executive is responsible for the overall management of the Trust. In addition, there are ten members of staff in total comprising a Property Manager; two Resident Wardens; Housing Manager; Finance Administrator; Secretary/Receptionist; Reception/Admin Assistant; Maintenance Officer and a Housekeeper.

The Trust offices are in The Market House, Bampton Street (the contact details are at the back of this handbook).

#### Managing our Almshouses

The Trust owns eighty-five almshouses situated on three sites within Tiverton:

- John Greenway Close, Gold Street, Tiverton EX16 6QF
- Greenway Gardens, King Street, Tiverton EX16 5JL
- Sles, Angel Terrace, Tiverton EX16 6PB.

John Greenway Close and Greenway Gardens each have a Resident Warden.

The Trust is looking to develop new almshouses in the coming years.

Accommodation is suitable for independent living and each flat is a self-contained unit. There are three criteria for allocating accommodation which are set down in the governing Scheme:

1. Applicants must be over 60 years of age, and
2. Have lived in Tiverton or environs for the past two years\*, and
3. Be in need of charitable accommodation.

(\*There is an exceptions policy in certain circumstances which is kept in the office.)

Residents move in to unfurnished accommodation and are expected to live independently at the outset. Given the current government policy to care for people at home instead of in nursing homes and local hospitals, there are an increasing number of residents who are in receipt of care packages. This is considered further in the Chapter entitled Care & Support of Residents. Accommodation at John Greenway Close and Greenway Gardens has an emergency call system for residents to use when the Resident Warden is off-duty.

The almshouses are directly maintained by Trust staff including the communal facilities and gardens.

## Chapter Three

### Care & Support of Residents

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#### The Resident Warden

##### Hours of Duty and Contact

The Resident Warden is on-duty between 8.00am to 12.30pm Monday to Friday including Bank Holidays. In addition to these hours, the Resident Warden is contracted to work six flexi-hours per week designed to be used for unforeseen events, staff meetings and special residents' gatherings that run in the afternoons.

The best way to contact the Resident Warden is during duty hours by pulling the emergency call system even when the query is not an emergency. During duty hours calls will go directly to the Resident Warden. At all other times the Resident Warden is off-duty and all residents and their families are asked to respect this. The Resident Warden may not respond outside the above duty hours even for seemingly minor requests.

The CEO will hold monthly drop-in meetings on site to meet residents individually for discussion about any issues or to hear from them on any topic.

The contact details for the Resident Warden are in Chapter Eight. This may be useful for relatives.

##### The Role and Duties of the Resident Warden

The role of the Resident Warden can best be described as being a good neighbour; duties do not include personal care. Any resident requiring personal care will need to access those services through the GP, social services or private care agencies. The Housing Manager may be able to help signpost residents and families in these circumstances.

The Resident Warden will visit each resident every weekday morning and can assist with:

- Calling a doctor or an ambulance.
- Collecting prescriptions in exceptional circumstances.
- Assist in organising transport to hospital or to a doctor's appointment.
- Organising events in the community room.
- Liaising with relatives.
- Liaising with health professionals and care agencies.

In addition the Resident Warden is responsible for:

- Day to day management of the site.
- Reporting repairs and maintenance to the office.

In the event of a resident's illness or an accident, the Resident Warden may contact the resident's family if considered necessary.

## **The Housing Manager**

### **Hours of Duty and Contact**

The Housing Manager is based in the Trust office and is the line manager to the Resident Wardens. Her hours of duty are 8.00am to 4.00pm Monday to Friday.

### **The Role of the Housing Manager**

The Housing Manager is responsible for overseeing the work of the Resident Wardens and the day to day management of the site. She provides support to the Resident Warden and residents, where needed.

The Housing Manager also carries out the Resident Wardens' daily duties when they are absent.

The Housing Manager is also responsible for liaising with health care professionals and hospital discharge teams to ensure the most effective care for residents who are unwell for any length of time and for those being discharged from hospital.

Where a resident suffers from a long term condition or requires extra support, the Housing Manager may regularly liaise with the resident's chosen relatives and work with them to provide the best solution for the resident given the need for Directors and staff of the Trust to be able to discharge their duty of care.

### **The Emergency Call System**

The emergency call system can be used 24 hours a day. It is linked to a call centre, unless the Resident Warden is on duty in which case it is linked directly to the Resident Warden. The call centre is a friendly organisation that has contact details for each resident and will be aware of which resident is making the call.

Residents are encouraged to use the call system in the following circumstances:

- To call for an ambulance
- To call for the police in the event of a security concern
- To call for the fire service in the event of a fire
- To call for the Resident Warden during her hours of duty

Residents must respond to the call centre if the smoke detector is activated by mistake (burnt toast, perhaps?) or the fire brigade will be called out unnecessarily. In these circumstances the call centre will speak to the resident through the speech module.

Every week, the Resident Warden will carry out a check to ensure the call system is working by contacting the resident instead of making a visit. This will always happen on an appointed day.

Every month, two members of staff will call on an appointed day to check the smoke detectors and to check each emergency system pull-cord is working. Residents will be told in advance when this will happen. In order to minimise disruption to residents, sub-contractors carrying out essential routine checks (such as water temperature testing to reduce the legionella risk) may accompany the members of staff.



## **Aids and Adaptations**

The Trust recognises the government's shift in caring for the older person at home rather than in hospital. In such circumstances, every effort will be made to work with health and social services when they ask to provide aids and adaptations to a resident's flat.

Structural changes will not be permitted, issues such as modifying bathrooms/kitchens will be considered on an individual basis, following an occupational health assessment to see if this is possible, but this may not be the case in all circumstances.

## **Night-sitting**

Guests are not allowed to stay in residents' accommodation other than in exceptional circumstances as a result of an urgent health need. There is a detailed policy providing guidance on this matter and Resident Wardens can provide copies. In summary, night-sitters must be professional carers required by the GP to meet a specific need within a specific timeframe. Exceptions may be made for family members to night-sit but only in specific circumstances (please ask the Resident Warden for further details).

## **Falls**

Members of staff are not permitted to assist a resident who has fallen to get back up. Instead, staff will call an ambulance. This policy is for the benefit of residents and staff. Potential injuries for both residents and staff can be made worse by inexperienced lifting.

## **Administering Medication**

Staff will never administer medication to residents.

## **Moving to another flat**

Residents are only permitted to move to another flat on the same site when there are justifiable medical grounds. The usual circumstances for such a request would be a move downstairs due to failing mobility, restricted vision or respiratory problems, although these are by no means the only reasons.

Whatever the medical circumstance, it is most likely that a letter from the GP supporting the move will be required.

Requests not supported by medical evidence are extremely unlikely to be successful.

## **Powers of Attorney and Wills**

Powers of Attorney are documents that give a chosen individual power to make decisions for another living person over financial and/or wellbeing matters in the event that their capacity to make decisions has diminished. Such agreements are made prior to there being a problem and are usually activated when mental capacity is lost. Wills, on the other hand, contain the wishes and instructions to be carried out after a person has died.

Both documents are essential if residents wish to be clear about what they would like to happen in the future. Staff cannot advise or become involved in the drawing up of these documents. In the event that a resident has suffered an illness and cannot communicate, it is very helpful if relatives, friends and staff know who to contact. A Power of Attorney is strongly recommended because it allows a trusted person of choice to act for the resident. If the Trust is unable to communicate with

the resident, for reasons of illness, and no Power of Attorney is in place, the Court of Protection may become involved. This is often a slow and time-consuming process.

### **Personal Information and Data Protection**

Gathering personal information is necessary in order for staff to carry out their duties and to enable the emergency call centre to access the correct people in times of need. Staff and Directors at Tiverton Almshouse Trust take confidentiality and data protection seriously and copies of the approved policy and procedures are available to all residents and their families. Please ask the Resident Warden for a copy.

There are two formal occasions when residents will be asked for information such as contact details, GP name, key holders and where any documents such as wills or power of attorney are kept. The first is when a resident moves in and the second is at a six monthly meeting between the Housing Manager, the Resident Warden and each resident. The need for a six monthly check is because contact details (especially mobile numbers) change regularly.

Each time information is collected, it is handled in accordance with our approved policy and only accessed on a need to know basis.

When information is out of date or no longer relevant it will be shredded on site or confidentially disposed of.

### **Housing Benefit**

Residents whose income consists of the basic state retirement pension with little or no savings may be entitled to Housing Benefit. Mid Devon District Council will be able to help. Assistance in filling out forms and claiming benefits can be found through Age UK. Contact numbers are in Chapter Nine.

## Chapter Four

### Safety and Security

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#### Emergency Call System

The emergency call system is linked directly to a call centre operated by a company called Tunstall unless the Resident Wardens are on-duty and then the emergency call system is directly linked to them.

The call system is activated by:

- Pulling one of the red cords available in all rooms, or
- Pushing the red button on a speech module, or
- Pushing the button on a pendant or wrist band (see below).

When the system is activated in the flat, the call centre will know which resident is calling and the resident's details, such as family contact numbers, will automatically be available to the responder in the call centre.

When a call is activated the call centre will not leave the resident until help is sorted. In an emergency, the emergency services will be called. Access is available to every flat by a master key kept securely in a key safe known only to the emergency services at the time of their arrival.

For non-emergency cases the call centre will call the first point of contact on the resident's contact list (it will be out of duty hours or the Resident Warden would have taken the call anyway).

If the emergency call centre is called because of an urgent maintenance matter (such as an overflowing WC, lack of heating etc) then one of the Trust's sub-contractors will be called directly by the call centre. They have all the relevant telephone numbers.

*It is important for all pull-cords to be left hanging down and not tied up "out of the way".*

#### Pendants

Pendants are available and can be worn as a necklace and wristbands are worn in the same way as a watch. When the red button on a pendant or wristband is pushed the same emergency call procedure outlined above will take place because it is the same as pulling a cord in the room.

The Trust has a few pendants available for temporary use where a resident may feel at risk from falling as a result of an illness or vulnerable after a discharge from hospital. The Resident Warden will be delighted to help and will programme the pendant accordingly.

In these circumstances the pendant is on loan and will need to be returned after a reasonable time. For residents wishing to have a pendant or wristband permanently, purchase can be made through the Trust Office. Details are available from the Resident Warden.

#### Fire Precautions

The Trust takes fire precaution measures extremely seriously and expects residents to also take responsibility for their own safety and that of their neighbours.

- **Smoke Detectors**

Smoke detectors are fitted in all flats and communal areas. They are checked every month by Trust staff. In the event that a smoke detector is activated by mistake (this usually happens in the kitchen following burnt toast!) **it is essential that the resident responds immediately** to the call centre who will have been alerted as soon as the detector goes off. This can be done by talking through the speech module. If the resident does not respond immediately the call centre will call the fire brigade.

- **Portable Appliance Tests**

Residents are responsible for the safety of their own electrical equipment. Each electrical appliance must be regularly checked by an electrician and certified as safe (this is called a Portable Appliance Test).

- **Smoking**

Smoking is prohibited in the communal areas on site, in line with general law. Residents are requested to refrain from smoking in their homes. Smoking is a fire hazard.

Passive smoking is a hazard to staff and visitors to flats where residents smoke. The Trust respectfully asks all residents to refrain from smoking.

Residents should know that if, as a result of their smoking, an almshouse dwelling was damaged or discoloured by cigarette smoke, they could be liable for the cost of repair or redecoration.

- **Candles**

Lit candles must never be left unattended and must always be placed on a fire-proof surface such as a ceramic plate or metal tray (please note that nightlights/tealights can burn through the thin metal container they sit in and set fire to the surface below).

- **Toasters**

Toasters must not be placed directly under a kitchen wall unit.

- **Fire Doors**

Must not be wedged open.

- **Front Doors**

Must be kept shut (most are fire doors)

- **Additional heaters**

Are not permitted.

## **The Fire Drill**

A summary of the fire drill is in each flat – on the back of the front door. All residents must familiarise themselves with it.

You must check where your assembly point is when you move in.

- **Fire in your flat**

1. Leave the flat, close the door; and
2. Set off the fire alarm by breaking the glass in a red call box in the nearest corridor or use a communal speech module; and
3. Walk to the assembly point

- **Fire elsewhere**

1. Set off the fire alarm by breaking the glass in the red call box in the nearest corridor or call the emergency call centre using a speech module, pull cord or pendant.
2. Make your way away from the fire, close the doors and go to the assembly point.

- **Hearing the fire alarm (means the fire brigade is on its way)**

Leave your flat, if it is safe to do so, close the door and make your way to the assembly point unless you can see that the fire is in another building in which case you can stay put behind closed doors.

**If you are in the community room or laundry when you hear the fire alarm or see a fire, leave the area, close the doors and go to the assembly point.**

## Security

The Trust recommends that residents keep their front door locked at all times. In the event that a resident is unsure about who is on site, or knocking at their door, the emergency call system should be used.

In the past, some residents have opened their doors to unscrupulous visitors asking for money (or selling unwanted goods). In these circumstances, if a resident feels unsafe in any way, the emergency call system should be used immediately. The Resident Warden should always be informed.

Some doors to site and communal areas are locked at night. Many of those doors are on an automatic system. In order for the door to lock, it must be shut. Residents are, therefore, requested to keep all doors to buildings on site shut at all times and to remind visitors to do the same, especially in late afternoon and at night.

Residents are asked to be vigilant at all times and to keep windows shut and doors locked when they leave their flat. The communal nature of the site can sometimes lead to a false sense of security.

## Keys and Keyholders

Residents can have front door keys cut for a relative or friend but permission must first be given by the Trust office. This not only ensures that a record of keyholders can be kept but is necessary for the required authorisation needed by a keycutter before the key can be cut.

Staff will not unlock a resident's flat for anybody who is not authorised by the resident. Strict records are kept by staff of who is given permission to enter a flat and these records are signed by residents every six months to ensure the details are up to date and verified.

## Access to a Resident's Flat

<p><b>Access to a Resident's Flat when the Resident is away on holiday or in hospital.</b></p>	<p>The Trust requires each resident to provide information on who the resident gives permission to enter their flat if they are absent on holiday or in hospital. Under no circumstances will access be given by the Trust staff unless the resident has previously given written permission signed by them (even if they are next of kin). This information and signing process will be reviewed with the resident every six months.</p>
<p><b>Access to a Resident's Flat by Trust Staff</b></p>	<p>All residents must allow Trust staff to access their flat for emergency purposes or for carrying out routine essential maintenance. Notice is</p>

	usually given by the Resident Warden for essential maintenance such as fire detection checks and emergency-call system checks.
<b>Access to a Resident's Flat by Sub-Contractors</b>	In the event that non-emergency maintenance is needed, the resident will usually have informed the Resident Warden and signed permission will have been granted by the resident willing to allow sub-contractors to access their flat if they are out. If the resident does not consent to allowing access in their absence, the sub-contractor will make an appointment to carry out the work at a time when the resident is present. In an emergency and where access is urgently needed and the resident is absent, trust staff will admit the sub-contractor. Out of office hours, the sub-contractor will be able to access keys from a secure safe for emergency repairs.
<b>Access to the Resident's Flat in the event of a Resident's death</b>	If a resident passes away all keyholders will be asked to give keys back to Trust staff without delay. Keyholders are known to the Trust from the information provided by the resident. It is essential that residents provide accurate and up to date records to the Housing Manager and Resident Wardens. Opportunity to do this is given at the six-monthly meetings between residents and the Resident Warden and/or Housing Manager. Trust staff will only give keys to the proven Executor of the Will. In the event of there being no Will, the Chief Executive will undertake to contact all family members known to the Trust and seek to find a consensus on who should be appointed as a spokesperson.

### **Trip Hazards**

Residents are asked to be vigilant on hazards which could give rise to a trip, slip or fall. Rugs and mats are best avoided as they are liable to curl or slide across a surface. Electrical extension leads can be hazardous. The Resident Warden should be contacted if additional electrical sockets are needed.

### **Gritting and salting paths**

Not all paths will be gritted or salted in winter. This is especially so during the weekend when the Resident Warden is not on duty.

The Trust recommends that residents do not leave their flat in icy conditions or when snow has fallen. Residents are required to take responsibility for their own safety and the safety of their visitors. Residents are asked to telephone any visitors who are due to call that day if conditions underfoot are hazardous.

As far as possible, during the week, the Resident Warden and Maintenance Officer will undertake gritting and salting first thing in the morning. Instead of the Resident Warden visiting each resident, she will make a call through the emergency call system to each resident and will then commence gritting and salting.

Residents are not allowed to assist the staff in this process.

We would request that residents stay in their flat whilst the staff are clearing paths.

The laundry may be closed during icy weather and events in the community room may be cancelled to avoid any incentive for residents to leave their flat. The Resident Warden will inform residents accordingly.

If a resident needs essential provisions or an emergency prescription collecting during this time, the Resident Warden will be happy to help.

## **Floods**

The Trust has a flood plan in place which has been approved by the Environment Agency. A copy of the plan is available from the Trust office. Residents will be kept informed in the event that a flood is forecast.

All residents should rest assured that flooding is not a normal occurrence.

## Chapter Five

### Housekeeping Matters

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**Residents are requested to keep their accommodation in a clean and tidy condition at all times.**

#### Community Room

The community room is for the use of all residents. Most weekdays it is used for at least one activity. All residents are encouraged to use the community room but there is no obligation to join in.

The Resident Warden will organise some events but generally residents organise their own gatherings supported by the Resident Warden if required.

The community room can also be used by relatives and friends to celebrate a resident's birthday, wedding anniversary etc. The Resident Warden will need to be consulted and will check the room is available. On these occasions where catering is planned, the environmental health policies of the Trust must be followed. Details must be obtained from the Resident Warden and the policy is displayed in the community kitchen.

The community room is not available for non-resident celebrations.

#### Laundry

Opening hours vary on each site and further details will be given at the time of moving in.

The communal laundry is available to residents for their own personal laundry only and is free of charge. Residents are asked to respect this by not carrying out any unnecessary washes and making up a full load each time. For costing purposes the Trust has assumed that each resident will only use the laundry once or twice a week.

Washing machines and tumble driers are generally not permitted in residents' flats.

Washing lines are also available in certain areas of the gardens.

#### Guest Room

Friends and relatives are not permitted to stay overnight in residents' flats due to the terms of occupancy under licence. There is a guest room available for the nominal charge of £30 per night for a short period (normally up to seven days). The guest room is en-suite and has twin single beds. The beds will be made up and towels are available.

The room is available from 2pm on the booked day and must be vacated by 10am on the day of departure. Further housekeeping notes will be made available to all guests when they arrive.

Booking forms for the guest room can be found online at [www.tivertonalmshouse.org.uk](http://www.tivertonalmshouse.org.uk) or from the warden. Payment is to be made via bacs. Cash will not be accepted.

Residents are responsible for ensuring that their guests respect the Trust's property and leave the guest room in the same condition as they found it. The nominal charge is a contribution to the upkeep of the room, linen change, facilities and staff time.



## **Gifts to Staff and Directors of the Trust**

Staff and Directors of the Trust are not permitted to accept gifts apart from a one-off small token gesture such as a box of chocolates. The gift must be less than £10 in value unless it is a one-off collection for a very special occasion and a number of residents are contributing. Staff and Directors of the Trust are not permitted to accept gifts of personal items.

Staff, Directors and residents are not permitted to buy or sell items to each other for personal gain. No Director, nor member of staff or their families are permitted to receive any cash gifts at any time of the year from residents or their families.

## **Mobility Scooters**

Mobility scooters are not permitted to be stored inside a resident's flat. Scooters may only be stored in designated areas within the garages at John Greenway Close and Greenway Gardens. As spaces are limited, please do not purchase a scooter until you have discussed it with your warden. Also, the Trust will need to have sight of the insurance cover for your scooter.

## **Gardens**

The gardens are maintained by Trust staff. Residents are welcome to tend a dedicated area or keep a limited number of pots. The Resident Warden should be consulted prior to pots being displayed in order to ensure they do not create an obstruction (many of the paths on site need to be clear enough for buggies and mobility aids).

Residents wishing to tend an area of garden should discuss this with the Resident Warden.

Ornaments are not encouraged.

Regretfully, the Trust cannot allow trees to be planted in memory of residents or dedicated memorials to be placed in the gardens. This has happened in the past but limited space has now become a problem. Relatives and friends wishing to pay respects to former residents are very welcome to write and place photographs in the book of memories held in the community room.

## **Repairs and Redecoration**

Repairs:

Please see the section in Chapter Four regarding accessing flats for repairs and maintenance. Residents should inform the Resident Warden in the event that a repair is needed. The handyman is not to be instructed directly or requested to undertake a task by the resident. If the Resident Warden is off-duty and the repair is urgent, residents should call the emergency call-centre who will organise the usual sub-contractor to attend.

Floor coverings:

At the beginning of occupancy, the Trust will ensure flats are fully carpeted with vinyl in the kitchen and bathroom. Residents are welcome to change the floor coverings, after consultation with the Trust office, and always ensuring that carpets and vinyl are not foam-backed or glued to the floor. Vinyl in the kitchens and bathrooms must be non-slip.

Redecoration:

The Trust is responsible for external and internal redecoration of flats. The Trust will inspect all flats annually and, where necessary, will programme in any upgrades of kitchens and bathrooms subject to its financial resources.

## **Insurance**

Residents are responsible for insuring the contents of their home. The Trust insures the buildings.

Some insurance companies work on a postcode system and have been known to refuse to insure the contents of certain properties close to the rivers in Tiverton. In these circumstances, it may be more productive to use local insurance brokers. Please call the Trust office if you wish to discuss this.

## **Television**

The Trust pays the television licence for all residents.

Digital television signal (freeview) is available free of charge to all properties but residents wishing to use satellite television must pay for a contract with a provider of their choice. The Trust office must be consulted in this instance to ensure satellite dishes are kept to a minimum and sited appropriately. Existing dishes may have capacity for additional connections but permission from the Trust is necessary.

## **Council Tax**

Residents are responsible for paying their council tax. Enquires should be made to Mid Devon District Council.

## **Parking**

There are no car parking spaces available for residents or visitors on any of our sites. Any spaces are for emergency services, professional carers and Trust staff only.

## **Waste Collection and Bins**

Communal bins are provided in certain areas on the sites. The Resident Warden will explain the recycling system.

The bins are emptied and washed regularly. Residents are asked to make sure that the bin store areas are kept clean and tidy and that all rubbish is securely bagged and placed in the plastic lidded containers provided to avoid vermin. This is especially important for food waste.

## **Pets**

Animals must not be kept.

## **Chapels**

There is a chapel on site available for all residents to sit in whenever they wish or need a quiet moment. The chapel is often locked but a key can easily be made available.

## Chapter Six

### Terms of Occupancy

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#### Letter of Appointment

Residents are not tenants but beneficiaries of Tiverton Almshouse Trust and occupy under licence. The terms of occupancy are detailed in the Letter of Appointment signed before moving in. Many of these terms are outlined again in this chapter but the Letter of Appointment provides the legal basis for occupancy and it is the responsibility of the resident to familiarise themselves with the detailed terms. Residents requiring more information about the terms of occupation should not hesitate to ask a member of staff and are encouraged to contact the Chief Executive.

#### Weekly Maintenance Contribution

The Trust charges a weekly contribution and not a rent. This is because residents occupy under licence. Contributions for maintenance are charged weekly but residents are asked to pay monthly in advance by standing order on the first of every month.

The maintenance contribution is a payment towards the cost of maintaining the homes and the essential services in them. It is reviewed by the Trust every year in April. Notice of any change in the maintenance contribution is given at the beginning of March. The level of contribution is regulated by the Homes & Communities Agency and Mid Devon District Council is consulted to ensure that contributions are fully covered by housing benefit where residents are eligible. There is an approved policy covering the detail of how all contributions are set. Copies can easily be made available.

#### Utility Contribution

An additional contribution is made by all residents for heating and water. These are itemised in the appointment letter and reviewed annually.

Residents are responsible for paying for their electricity usage but no other utility charges.

There is an approved policy covering the detail of how all contributions are set. Copies can easily be made available.

#### Absence

Residents must occupy their home as their prime residence and must live in the accommodation and **not be absent from it for more than 28 days per person per year without the permission of the Trust**. This is not designed to restrict holidays or impose unnecessary regulation but it is a condition of occupancy required by the Charity Commission within our governing document.

Please rest assured, residents are encouraged to visit and stay with family and friends, however, repeated absence may indicate that there is no need for our accommodation. Allocation of the almshouses is based on need.

Residents are required to inform the Resident Warden when they are absent from their flat overnight. This allows the Trust to inform the emergency call system. There may be occasions when a resident makes a late decision to stay away overnight and the Resident Warden is off-duty and cannot be informed. This is understandable on the odd occasion.

## **Guests**

All guests must stay in the guest room. Residents are not allowed to share their accommodation or sub-let or give up possession of it to someone else.

Further information is available in Chapter Five.

## **Moving Out**

Residents are asked to give four weeks' notice period before moving out. There may be exceptional circumstances where this is not possible, in which case the Trust may accept a shorter notice period.

During the notice period residents are responsible for the maintenance contribution and the utility contribution even if the resident has moved out.

The resident is responsible for keeping the Resident Warden informed of the moving out date and must meet the Resident Warden on the day of departure to complete a checklist and to hand over the keys.

The resident's responsibility for paying the maintenance and utility contributions ceases when the keys are handed to the Resident Warden at the agreed time.

The Trust may ask a resident to move to another flat on site, temporarily or permanently. This would normally only be necessary in the event of essential maintenance or repairs where it would be unsafe for the resident to stay in occupation.

## **Setting Aside an Appointment**

Residents may be asked to leave their accommodation in exceptional circumstances such as:

- The resident no longer fulfils the criteria to be eligible for the accommodation because their circumstances have changed.
- The resident persistently breaches the terms of their appointment.
- The resident is no longer suited to be a resident because of illness or disability.
- The resident causes repeated nuisance, annoyance or offence to other residents.

These Terms are set down by the Charity Commission in the governing document and must be repeated within the terms of occupation. Residents can be reassured, however, that the Trust would only consider taking such measures in exceptional circumstances and after discussion with the resident.

Tiverton Almshouse Trust is a member of The Housing Ombudsman service whose contact details are in Chapter Nine. Generally, The Housing Ombudsman will only be able to consider a complaint from a resident if the Trust's own complaints policy has been fully exhausted. The complaints policy is detailed below.

## **Complaints Policy**

The Trust is committed to providing an excellent service and complaints are seen as a positive way to improve services. All complaints will be taken seriously and handled fairly and sensitively. Due regard will be paid to confidentiality.

In the first instance complaints should be made to the Resident Warden or the Housing Manager. The complaint should be made as soon as the problem arises or shortly afterwards unless there is a good reason for delay. Initially a complaint may be made verbally.

In the event that the complaint is not solved this way, it can be made in writing to the Chief Executive at the Trust office. Written complaints will be acknowledged within five working days and an investigation will follow. The resident will be kept informed as to the course of action to be taken and the anticipated timescale. The Trust will aim to investigate all written complaints within fourteen days of acknowledgement. The Trust will seek to resolve the complaint as a matter of urgency and provide a written response to the complainant.

If the complainant is still not satisfied by the outcome, they have five further working days to submit a written appeal.

The appeal will be dealt with by the Chair of the Board or a Director appointed by the Chair who will convene a meeting within seven days of receiving the appeal. The Chair will respond in writing to the complainant within seven working days advising of any action taken to resolve the complaint.

If the resident remains unsatisfied with the way the complaint was handled or the outcome, the matter can be taken to The Housing Ombudsman service (contact details are given in Chapter Nine).

## Chapter Seven

### Policies

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The Trust holds policy documents on a comprehensive number of topics. The most relevant have been briefly summarised below.

- **Health & Safety Policy, Procedures and Management**  
This is a detailed policy including all statutory requirements and all procedures to be carried out by Trust staff including risk assessments, servicing, legionella protection, asbestos registers and staff training.
- **Environmental Health Policy and Checklist**  
A copy of the checklist is available in the communal kitchen and, amongst other things, provides guidance on the use of the facilities by residents and caterers.
- **Allocating Almshouses**  
This sets out the criteria for allocating accommodation as contained within the Trust's governing document produced by the Charity Commission and the procedure taken during the application process.
- **Residents' Appointment and Occupation**  
This policy provides detail on the licence for occupation and the terms of appointment. More information on this can be found in Chapter 6 of this handbook.
- **Weekly Maintenance and Utility Contributions**  
Every year the maintenance and utility contributions are reviewed. The policy outlines the formula used, the regulatory requirements and procedure for that review.
- **Residents' Involvement**  
This sets out how residents are involved in and informed about Trust decisions such as the twice yearly residents' meetings, the regular Pastoral Sub-committee agenda, the monthly newsletter, an annual questionnaire, and contact with staff and Directors.
- **Gifts and Legacies**  
This policy was introduced to establish clarity and to protect staff and residents alike. Chapter Five provides more detail.
- **Professionalism**  
This policy, which covers Directors and staff ensures consistency and rigour in the manner in which the Trust carries out its work.
- **Data Protection & Privacy**  
The Trust protects all sensitive and personal data using a rigorous procedure involving secure storage, the need to know, and disposal of data within prescribed time limits by shredding.
- **Equality & Diversity**  
The Directors and Senior Management of the Trust are committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion within our policies, practices and procedures. This applies to all aspects of the work of the Trust and within the organisation itself.
- **Safeguarding**  
All Directors and staff of the Trust shall adopt a zero tolerance to abuse and/or neglect. Each staff member shall ensure they give positive regard to human rights legislation and ensure dignity is maintained at all times.

- **Whistleblowing**  
This policy applies to residents, directors, employees, volunteers, other third parties including suppliers and members of the public.
- **Complaints**  
The procedure for complaints is outlined in full in Chapter Six.

## Chapter Eight

### Frequently asked Questions

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#### **Can I move to another flat?**

Any move must be accompanied by medical evidence and will be on the same site. The usual circumstance is the need to move downstairs for mobility, respiratory or visual reasons. Other reasons may apply. Please discuss with the Resident Warden in the first instance.

#### **Can guests stay in my flat overnight?**

No. All guests are invited to stay in the guest room (a twin-bedded en-suite room on site) for £30 per night. Details in Chapter 5.

#### **Can I give a present to a member of staff?**

Yes, but only a one-off token gesture of limited value (the value of any gift must not exceed £10). Gifts of personal belongings are not permitted. Collections made by a number of residents for a special one-off occasion are not limited by this policy.

#### **Am I allowed to have a care package?**

Yes. Generally, we ask that new residents join us before they require a care package but we recognise as time moves on many residents need a little extra help. We will do our best to help to accommodate your needs, subject to our approved policies, but we are mindful that our historic accommodation can sometimes limit our intentions and our Resident Wardens do not provide personal care.

#### **Can I go away regularly?**

This is a difficult subject. Your flat is your prime residence and is allocated on the basis of need. If you stay away regularly for a number of nights each time this may indicate that you no longer need our accommodation. **The terms of the Trust's governing document are that residents must live in their home and not be absent from it, without the Trust's permission, for more than 28 days in any year.** Annual holidays and periodic visits to family or friends are encouraged. If you are in doubt please talk to the Resident Warden.

#### **Can the Resident Warden help me with my medication?**

No they are not permitted to do this

#### **Can I do some gardening?**

This is a possibility and encouraged although you need to double check with the Resident Warden which area is available and you need to be sure you can maintain the area regularly.

#### **Who can I talk to when I am not happy about something?**

In the first instance it is best that you speak to the Resident Warden. If this is not helpful, please contact our Housing Manager (Nikki Askew) in the office on 01884 251444. Nikki is always happy to be contacted on 07553373791 or Doreen Woodward CEO who can be contacted on 07947487090. The full complaints procedure is given in Chapter Six.

#### **Who will carry out any necessary repairs in my flat?**

When something needs repairing please ask the Resident Warden when she is next on duty. If it is an emergency please use the emergency call system. The Resident Warden may ask our handyman to fix it otherwise it will be referred to our sub-contractors to mend it. Please do not ask the handyman directly, instead report repairs to the Resident Warden. Full details on access to your flat are given in Chapter Four.



## Chapter Nine

### Contact Details

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#### Resident Wardens:

**Erin Kerrigan (Greenway Gardens)**  
**Margaret Steed (John Greenway Close)**

To contact the Resident Warden use the emergency call system during duty hours 8.00am – 12.30pm Monday to Friday (including bank holidays).

#### Housing Manager

**Nikki Askew**  
**See Trust Office details below**

#### Property Manager

**Debbie Cruse**

#### The Trust Office (8.30am – 4.00pm weekdays)

The Market House  
18 Bampton Street  
Tiverton  
Devon  
EX16 6AA

01884 251444

[trust@tivertonAlmshouse.org.uk](mailto:trust@tivertonAlmshouse.org.uk)

[www.tivertonAlmshouse.org.uk](http://www.tivertonAlmshouse.org.uk)

#### Other useful numbers

**Mid Devon District Council**  
**Phoenix Lane**  
**Tiverton**

01884 255255

**Age UK Devon**

Information and advice:  
0333 241 2340

**The Housing Ombudsman**

0300 111 3000  
[info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

We hope you enjoy a long and happy stay in your new home.