**DORCHESTER MUNICIPAL CHARITIES**

**RESIDENTS’ HANDBOOK**

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**Dorchester Municipal Charities**

**NAPPERS AND WHETSTONES ALMSHOUSES**

**Whetstones, West Walks, Dorchester, DT1 1AW**

**Nappers House, West Walks, DT1 1RF**

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| --- | --- | --- |
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Welcome to Dorchester Municipal Charities.

The Trustees hope that the information provided in this book will help you to be happy here.

1. **INTRODUCTION**

The 17th century saw the creation of three almshouse charities in Dorchester – Whetstones, Napper’s Mite and Chubbs. These merged between World War 1 and World War 2 to become known as Dorchester Municipal Charities.

The present charity has 9 Trustees including the Mayor of Dorchester and a staff team to manage the daily running of the flats.

We are registered with the Charity Commission and the Regulator of Social Housing. We are members of the Housing Ombudsman Service and National Almshouse Association.

Please see our website or our History Booklet for further information.

**The Premises**

West Walks is situated in a quiet location in the centre of Dorchester, adjacent to the Victorian Borough Gardens and park, within level walking distance of the town.

Most flats have one bedroom; one is a bedsit. Some have level access or a stairlift.

**Whetstones** is our larger site and includes our oldest building.

There are 18 flats with a community room for all our residents, on both sites, to use. Our resident Warden lives on this site and the Clerk’s Office is located here.

The gardens were improved in 2015 with donations & grants from local individuals and businesses.

**Nappers House** consists of 8 flats and is also situated in West Walks. We plan to make improvements there in due course.

The Charity manages unfurnished almshouse accommodation designed with the needs of older people in mind. The principle behind everything the Trust does is that residents enjoy independence and the freedom to come and go as they please while living in comfortable secure accommodation. Residents should feel confident in the knowledge that support will always be available, whether from the Charity itself or from outside agencies, should the need arise. Above all, DMC respects residents’ privacy.

1. **TRUSTEES AND STAFF**

**Trustees and other voluntary roles**

* Residents may contact Trustees on the following numbers
* One or two Trustees will carry out an annual visit to residents in their almshouses, by arrangement
* The Trustees meet throughout the year to discuss the running of the charity and almshouses

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Role / Working Group** |
| Cllr Molly Rennie | DMC Chairman  Management Team Chairman |
| Mr Nigel Bundy | Vice Chairman  Welfare Group Chairman  Management Team |
| Mr John Christmas | Vice Chairman  Property Group Chairman (including Health & Safety) |
| Cllr Fiona Kent-Ledger | Property Group |
| Mr David Pinder | Property Group |
| Mrs Sally Goss | Welfare Group |
| Cllr Janet Hewitt | Welfare Group |
| Cllr Susie Hosford | Welfare Group |
|  |  |
| The Mayor of Dorchester | Honorary Trustee |
|  |  |
| Mr Peter Mann | Honorary President |

**Staff Team**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Role** | **Working hours** |
| Vanessa Gottesman | General Manager &  Clerk to the Trustees | Monday, Tuesday (home)  Wednesday, Thursday (office)  9.30am-5.00pm |
| Pippa Knight | Warden | Weekdays  8.00am-1.00pm |
| Sara Wood | Financial Clerk | Wednesday  8.30am-4.00pm |
| Viv Pearce | Cleaner | Tuesday  8.30-11.30am |

1. **SAFETY**

**Emergency call system: Careline**

You will be shown how to use this system when you move in. All emergency calls go directly to Appello Careline who will contact the Warden or the appropriate services required. This service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week - even on Christmas Day!

* If you have a pendant please wear it at all times.
* Please **do** use the call system by day or night to get help for a sudden illness or accident.
* Please **don’t** use the alarm to make **normal** contact with the Warden, you may contact her during working hours via the telephone numbers listed. In an emergency Careline will contact the Warden for you.

**Intercom System**

If you wish the Warden can call you each weekday morning at around 8.00-8.30 am and Careline will call at the weekend or if the Warden is absent.

Please let Careline, or the Warden, know if you are away or going out before the normal morning call.

**Fire Precautions**

The almshouses comply with the appropriate fire regulations. There is a Fire Emergency Plan in each flat. Please read it carefully. The Warden will check through it with you on arrival.

Each flat contains smoke and heat detectors, a sounder plus a 2-minute button. The Warden will explain how these work. Please speak to the Warden if you are hard of hearing and need extra equipment.

Please note the following points:

* The alarms are usually tested every Friday and you will be notified by the Warden, via the intercom, prior to testing.
* A fire drill is carried out at least once a year and all residents are expected to participate.
* **Do not** leave pans unattended on the cooker, especially chip pans.
* **Do not** attempt to fight any fire, you should leave the premises *immediately* closing the door behind you.
* You are advised against smoking in your flat, but if you do smoke please dispose of smoking materials safely.
* No smoking is allowed in communal areas, including hall, stairways and gardens.

**Legionella**

* It is important that boiler temperatures are kept at 55 degrees for hot water, to prevent legionella.
* Residents are asked to disinfect and descale showerheads and inside hoses thoroughly and regularly to reduce the risk of legionella.
* Residents are asked to run the water at all taps and shower (hottest setting) for at least 5 minutes on return from extended trips eg holidays, hospital admissions, to flush the system which reduces the risk of legionella.

**Health & Safety**

The Board of Trustees have responsibility for implementing the charity’s Health & Safety policy. The Property Group Chairman is responsible for implementing and monitoring the policy.

1. **SECURITY**

Please bear in mind the following:

* Keep your front door locked at all times
* Identify all callers, using the chain if you have one, before opening the door. The chain should only be used to open the door a few inches when identifying callers and ***must not be kept in permanent use***. If you do not have a chain but would like one please ask the Warden
* You must not fit extra locks to your door as these may prevent entry in an emergency
* Don’t allow a stranger to enter your home without proof of identity. If you are in doubt, please call the Warden or Careline
* ‘No Uninvited Doorstep Traders’ signs are available from the Warden to place on your front door.

**The Master Key**

The Warden, office staff, and our Emergency Trustees hold a master key to your home which will only be used in an emergency, or with your permission. There is also a master key in a coded key safe on each site. The Warden and Careline have the code which can be given to professionals (eg Doctors) in an emergency should it become necessary. The Fire Service has the code. This code is changed every time it is used, so your home is always secure.

Your privacy will be respected. The Warden has strict instructions only to enter your home if:

* You ask her to do so
* You give permission for work to be carried out in your absence
* There is an emergency.

Extra keys can only be cut with the written permission of the General Manager or a Trustee. The General Manager will arrange this. You cannot just get a key cut locally - this is a security measure. All keys will be recorded and you must inform the General Manager if you give a key to anyone. Eg. Family member, cleaner etc.

1. **SERVICES PROVIDED**

The Warden is there to watch over your health and welfare without interfering in your life or intruding on your privacy.

The Careline call system is available 24 hrs a day, 365 days a year. It will be used each morning by the Warden to contact individual residents to ensure that all is well. It will also be used if there is something that she wishes to convey to all the residents at once i.e.; a fire alarm test.

The Warden will walk around the estate each morning and visit residents when required.

The Warden also looks after the building and in an emergency she will call for help on your behalf and notify your family and/or friends. At other times the Warden will help you to arrange for health care or social services such as home care or meal deliveries.

The Warden will **not** provide personal care herself, or fetch shopping or prescriptions except in emergencies: However, she will advise on how you can get the help you need elsewhere.

The Warden is on duty between 8am and 1pm from Monday to Friday. Please respect her off duty time and privacy in her own home.

**Repairs and Decorations**

*External decorations and repairs to communal areas:*The Trustees are responsible for external decoration and repairs to the communal areas.

*Internal decorations and minor repairs:* You are responsible for internal work such as decorations and minor repairs-please see the Regulations section.

*Gas, water, electrical maintenance and repair:* Trustees are responsible for all gas, water or electrical maintenance and repair; please do not make any alterations to these services, no matter how minor, as it will negate our insurance cover.

Please report all necessary work to the Warden or General Manager, who will arrange for it to be carried out. We need to keep a record of requested work so please do not contact contractors directly.

Workmen will not be allowed to enter your home while you are out unless you have agreed to this beforehand. However, an exception will have to be made if an emergency arises or access is required to rectify an urgent problem.

*In an emergency:*

When staff are not on-site:

* Pull the Careline cord in your flat and Appello will take appropriate action.
* Do not contact contractors directly as we need to keep a record of requested work.

**Insurance**

The Charity insures the buildings and charity contents. This does not cover resident items and you are advised to take out your own contents insurance on an ‘as new’ basis.

**TV Licence**

We purchase a concessionary TV licence for both sites. Flats where all the residents are under 75 may be charged the concessionary rate.

Please be considerate to your neighbours in the use of televisions, radios, stereos and musical instruments.

**Cleaning**

You are responsible for keeping your almshouse clean. If this is difficult, please discuss with the Warden.

*Windows:* You are responsible for cleaning the inside of the windows in your almshouse, but the Trustees employ a window cleaner who cleans the outside of all windows.

*Showers:*

* It is important that no drain unblocker products are put down the drain in the shower where there is a waste pump present as these can damage the mechanism. Please contact the office if you have a blockage.
* It is important that all shower heads are removed, cleaned, disinfected and de-scaled every three months. This should be part of your normal cleaning routine, please remind your cleaners if you have one. If you would like any advice on how to do this please ask the Warden or General Manager.

**Chubbs Community Room** is available for all residents to use and may be booked for private parties for a small donation. There is a notice board containing useful information and a clothes dryer for residents to use for a minimal charge.

**Gardens**

The gardens have been laid out for the use and benefit of all residents. However, some properties have adjacent areas which residents are encouraged to maintain themselves.

*Grass cutting*: This is the Charity’s responsibility; although in some cases, more active residents like to do this themselves. If you would like to help in the gardens, please ask the Warden or the General Manager to arrange this.

*Washing lines:* These are provided on each site for residents’ use. If weather does not permit, residents may use the communal dryer. We ask that residents do not dry laundry in other public areas as this is a potential safety hazard, unsightly and could cause offense to others.

**Pest Control**

You are requested not to put food on the ground for the birds as this encourages pests such as rats and seagulls. You may put out one hanging seed or nut feeder.

1. **REGULATIONS GOVERNING OCCUPATION OF NAPPERS & WHETSTONES ALMSHOUSES**

The following regulations for Residents are to ensure the smooth running of the almshouses.

* The Trustees may take such steps as they think proper in the administration of the Trust and for Residents’ welfare. Any alteration to the regulations will be notified in writing to each Resident.
* These regulations are made to ensure the proper running of the Charity and the general wellbeing of Residents. It is a condition of occupancy that new Residents sign the Letter of Appointment to signify their willingness to abide by the regulations and other conditions contained therein, before taking up occupation. In the event of an appointment being made by two persons, both should sign their agreement.
* The regulations will be reviewed periodically and may be amended by the Charity in consultation with Residents.

**RESIDENTS**

**Beneficiary of the Charity**

1. It must be noted that residents occupy an almshouse under licence in accordance with Charity Law and as a beneficiary of the Charity. Neither the resident nor any relation or guest of theirs will be a tenant of the Charity or have any legal interest in the almshouse.
2. Residents may expect to continue in occupation for as long as they need the accommodation providing they continue to qualify as a beneficiary, are able to look after themselves and their appointment as a beneficiary is not set aside.
3. Residents occupying jointly can usually continue in sole occupancy if their situations change, providing the remaining occupant meets the criteria. In the event of the death or departure of one partner, the Charity reserves the right to ask the remaining Resident to move to a smaller dwelling.

**Required documents:** Residents shall complete a Wellbeing Assessment and associated documents with the Warden during the first 2 weeks of occupation. These documents are reviewed regularly and if circumstances change.

**Data Protection**: Residents are provided with a copy of the Charity’s Privacy Notice which details the way DMC deals with personal information under current data protection laws.

**Anti-Social Behaviour:** Residents’ attention is drawn to the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.

**Complaints:** Residents’ attention is drawn to the Resident Complaints Policy &

Procedure, a copy of which is provided and available on the notice board at each site.

**Health:** If health deteriorates Residents must be willing to accept advice and guidance, either from their own doctor or a medical consultant appointed by the General Manager / Trustees. The General Manager / Warden /Trustees will also consult with the next of kin, Social Services and other agencies if necessary.

**Setting Aside an Appointment:** The Trustees retain the power to set aside a Resident’s appointment for good cause, e.g. in the case of serious misconduct, non-payment of contribution, a serious breach of the regulations, in any of the circumstances described in the Charity’s Scheme, or if the Resident is no longer a qualified beneficiary or is no longer able to live independently.

**Change in Circumstances:** It is the Residents’ responsibility to notify the Charity if their circumstances change. However unless your income were to substantially increase to the extent that you no longer qualify as a beneficiary, the likelihood is that you would be allowed to remain in the dwelling. Trustees reserve the right to review Residents’ financial circumstances from time to time.

**YOUR ALMSHOUSE**

**Weekly Contribution:** Residents are required to pay a weekly maintenance contribution to the Charity, payable monthly in advance by direct debit. This is not a rent. Residents must also pay associated charges such as service and housing management charges. The Charity may increase the amount on one month’s notice. The level of weekly maintenance contributions is reviewed annually but the Charity reserves the right to review it more frequently if it is in the Charity’s best interests. It is a condition of occupancy that the full weekly amount if paid regardless of the services or support elements used by the resident.

**Council Tax:** Each resident is responsible for paying their own Council Tax direct to the local council.

**Utility bills:** DMC arranges the supply and payment of water and gas plus Whetstones electricity. Nappers residents are responsible for arranging and paying for their own electricity.

**Keys:** Each Resident shall have a key which opens his\her flat only. Master keys are held by the office staff and the Warden and will normally only be used in an emergency but may be used at any other time on the authority of the General Manager or a Trustee.

**Heating:** Heating is provided via a gas boiler within the flat or in the boiler room. The use of paraffin oil and portable gas heaters is strictly prohibited. Please consult the Warden or General Manager if you require additional heating.

**Careline:** There is a Careline system provided in each flat. Residents may apply for extra equipment via the Charity’s provider but may not use another provider.

**Fire prevention:** There are smoke, heat and fitted throughout each flat which activate the fire alarm in the event of smoke or fire. These alarms must not be disconnected or covered at any time. Residents are expected to participate in annual fire drills.

**Electrical items:** Any untested electrical items brought into a flat will receive a Portable Appliance Test by a qualified electrician, at the expense of the Charity, and thereafter every 3 years. Items owned by the Charity, such as fridges, are tested annually. If Residents or the Charity are concerned about an item, they may request it is tested. The Charity reserves the right to have any potentially dangerous items tested and removed if found to be unsafe.

**Repairs:** The Trustees undertake to carry out repairs to the property, including external decorations. Internal decorations, broken window glass and wear and tear are excluded.

**Security:** Security chains may only be used when answering the door and must be undone at all other times.

**Insurance:** The flats are unfurnished and Residents are advised to make sure that their furniture and other possessions are properly insured as they are NOT covered by the policies maintained by the Charity. All furniture brought into the flat must comply with the Furniture and Furnishings Regulations 1988 with particular regard to their fire safety. After full consultation with the Resident, the Trustees reserve the right to remove any furniture which is considered a fire hazard or fire escape hazard without compensation.

**Noise:** Residents are required to occupy the property quietly and with thought for other Residents and/or neighbours. No radio, TV or music system should be operated in such a manner as to cause a disturbance, nor shall anything be done in, upon or about the premises which shall be a nuisance, annoyance or disturbance to the occupants of other almshouses, members of staff or the general public.

**Cleanliness & Storage of Items:** Residents should keep their almshouse clean and tidy and avoid storage of excess or unnecessary items. Hoarding of excess goods in extreme cases may be grounds for setting aside an appointment. The Trustees reserve the right to make use of the local council’s hoarding policy where relevant. All defects which become apparent in the property should be reported to the General Manager or Warden.

**Access to flats:** Whilst at all times the Charity will respect the privacy of the Residents, it is a condition of residency that Residents allow reasonable and regular access to their almshouses for servicing, repairs and decoration to be carried out. Representatives of the Charity will visit from time to time by prior appointment.

**Flat alterations:** Residents are not allowed to make any structural alterations to the dwellings, nor to alter the plumbing, gas or electrical installation without written prior consent of the Trustees. No shelves, cupboards, locks or fittings shall be fixed or removed, nor shall any alteration be made to any room or its fittings without the prior consent of the General Manager or Trustees.

**Absence:** Residents must live in the almshouse as their permanent residence and not be absent from the dwelling for more than 28 consecutive days in any year without the prior consent of the Charity and should inform the General Manager / Warden whenever they plan to be absent overnight in order that all Residents may be accounted for in case of emergency.

**Alternative accommodation:** There may be circumstances, for example during extensive refurbishment, when the Charity will need to ask a Resident(s) to vacate the dwelling and move, either temporarily or permanently, to another dwelling. The Charity reserves the right to do so, after full consultation with the Resident. When a flat becomes vacant, Residents are given first refusal.

**Smoking:** This is prohibited in all common areas including external areas. Residents are advised against smoking in flats according to the Charity’s policy on smoking, a copy of which is available on request.

**Place of Work:** With the permission of the Charity, residents may be allowed to work from their almshouse, however they must guarantee that this will not be disruptive for other residents and that it will not involve delivery or storage of items and/or visitors to the buildings.

**LIVING AT DMC**

**Other Residents:** Residents are expected to respect the privacy, beliefs and lifestyle choices of other Residents.

**Telephone lines:** Many residents have chosen to install a telephone line for use with phone or broadband. Any costs relating to the installation of, repair to, moving of or removal of telephone lines is the responsibility of each resident.

**Social Media:** Those Residents using social media such as Facebook and Twitter are asked to respect the fact that no views should be expressed via social media about the Charity, its Trustees, other Residents or Staff.

**Pets:** The Charity’s Policy on Pets is that, due to the size and situation of the almshouses, Residents are discouraged from keeping pets, although the Trustees will consider applications on a case by case basis. Assistance or Guide Dogs are accepted. Visitors may bring a pet for a short time providing it is not allowed to run around the grounds or cause nuisance to other Residents, eg by barking.

**Mobility scooter:** Residents may apply to the Trustees to keep a mobility scooter at the charity’s premises providing there is an appropriate area where it can be kept. All such vehicles are kept by the Residents entirely and solely at the Resident’s risk. Proof of insurance should be provided to the Trustees. Please see the Mobility Scooter Policy & Procedures for more information.

**Parking:** Residents, informal family carers and visiting professionals may park on-site in accordance with the Charity’s car parking policy. Visitors are not permitted to park on-site but may pick up and drop off residents.

**Smoking:** This is prohibited in all common areas, including entrance halls, corridors and the common rooms. Residents must comply with the charity’s policy on smoking.

**Visitors:** Visitors may come and go as they please providing there is no disturbance to neighbours. Friends and family may be allowed to stay overnight (max 3 weeks in any calendar year or with written permission). These must not be regular occurrences and Residents must advise the Warden or General Manager in advance, for health and safety reasons. Visitors are subject to the regulations when on site.

**Damage to DMC property:** Residents are asked to take care of DMC property whether in the flat or in communal areas. Residents may be asked to pay for the cost of any damage caused to DMC property.

**LEAVING DMC**

**Vacating the property:** Should a Resident wish to leave his/her dwelling to live elsewhere, not less than one calendar months’ notice in writing must be given to the Charity. Maintenance contributions remain payable until the notice period expires and the dwelling is vacated and cleared of furniture and possessions.

When the Resident vacates the almshouse for whatever reason, all items belonging to the Resident should be removed by him, her or a family member forthwith. Weekly maintenance contributions and utility bills must be paid up to the agreed departure date. Should a Resident ask to vacate the dwelling forthwith, the weekly maintenance contribution must be paid to the end of the notice period.

**Vacating the Property – remaining items:** In the unlikely event that any possessions, chattels or goods are, without the written agreement of the Charity, left abandoned by the Resident in the almshouse after the Resident has vacated, the Charity will take reasonable care of them or a period of up to 3 months. After this period the Resident agrees by signing the Letter of Appointment, that the Charity may sell them and, out of the proceeds, pay any outstanding amounts owing to the Charity, including outstanding weekly maintenance contributions and any other expenses including disposal and removal costs.

1. **LOCAL SERVICES**

**Hairdresser** There are hairdressers in the town centre and some of our residents have a mobile hairdresser who comes to their home. Please ask the Warden for details.

**Chiropodist** Some of our residents have a home visit but there are Chiropodists in town, as well as a nail clipping service provided by Age UK North South & West Dorset. Please see the Warden for further information.

**Pharmacies** There are several pharmacies in the town, most of these will deliver your medication if necessary. Please ask the Warden for further details.

**Doctor’s surgeries** There are several GP surgeries in Dorchester, please ask the Warden for details.

**General waste, recycling and food waste bins** are emptied early every Tuesday.

*Whetstones* residents are requested not to put rubbish in the bins until after 9am on Tuesdays to enable cleaning of the bin.

*Nappers 1-4* There is a green bin outside your front door.

*Nappers 5-8* There is a bin for your paper and for bottles and cans in Nappers car park.

**Garden waste** is collected early every Thursday at each site.

**Milk, papers, hot and frozen meal deliveries** are available locally, please ask the Warden for details.

**Shops and supermarkets** are located through the car park outside Whetstones. The nearest supermarkets are the Co-op and Iceland, with Waitrose in the Tudor Arcade, South Street. Tesco is approx 1.5 miles out of town on the Weymouth Road, and Lidl is at the bottom of The Grove.

**Social Events** This is a good way to meet the other residents. We do hope you will be able to come to some of our planned events and trips. The Warden will provide a list.

**Age UK North South & West Dorset** offer a variety of services for older people and their carers, from information and advice to social activities. They can be contacted on 01305 269444 or visit <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/northsouthwestdorset/services/> for further information.

If you have any questions or queries about anything in this document, or any other matter, please do not hesitate to ask the Warden or General Manager who will be pleased to assist.

We hope you will be very happy in your home.

Trustees & Staff of Dorchester Municipal Charities