

# Community Matters



## Out and about

From face-painting in Billericay to clearing scrub in the wilds of Hemel Hempstead

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## The Handyman can!

How our service is allowing residents to live independently in their homes for longer

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Working with West Herts College, we're exploring career opportunities

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## Welcome to the Spring edition of Community Matters.

There has been plenty going on at Osborne Property Services already this year, some of which you can read about in the pages that follow.

You will see there is a strong emphasis on work in the community, which is something we're very proud of. For us, helping our partners to build strong relationships with the communities in which they work is an essential part of making contracts a success.

On page 6, you can read about a really inspiring piece of work we did with Whitefield Academy – a local school for children with special educational needs. And you'll be amused by the fabulous comments from primary school children when they visited us on site at Moorside Road (page 8).

We also paid particular attention to our apprentices in March to mark National Apprenticeship Week. You can meet some of our apprentices on pages 10 and 11.

And finally, I'm delighted to introduce you, on page 9, to our new HandyPerson service, which is proving very popular with our residents.

I hope you enjoy!

Jo Fletcher  
Head of Engagement



**255**

initiatives supported/delivered

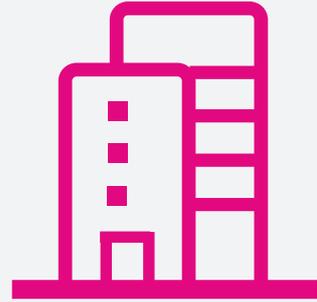


**20,840**

local people engaged/benefited

**81**

community facilities improved



**14,792**

extra staff hours



Cost of materials:

**£661,718**



# Community engagement



## Face time with residents in Billericay

**On a wet, chilly day in February, we donned our winter woolies and joined colleagues from the London Borough of Waltham Forest Council to support a family fun day in Billericay, Essex.**

Despite the weather, families turned out to enjoy the balloons, lollies, face-painting and other activities. As well as helping to bring the community together, the event gave residents the opportunity to meet up

and talk to us, and Waltham Forest Council, about anything to do with repair works in their area.

Neal Allison, Community Investment Manager at Osborne, said: "Working with our partners to support face-to-face contact through resident fun days is a really important part of what we do. It helps to build relationships and encourages intergenerational involvement."



## Making new homes for Hemel's local wildlife

**It's great to get in on a project early, especially when you have a suspicion that it could grow into something big. That's why we were really keen to get involved in organising a volunteering event on behalf of the Friends of the Halsey Field.**

The group was set up to transform what had been the site of a derelict school in Hemel Hempstead into a nature reserve to be used by the community and they needed help with

some maintenance works on the site.

So, with colleagues from Dacorum Borough Council Housing, we spent a good day clearing some of the overgrown scrub, which will encourage wildflowers to flourish and make the site more habitable for a range of wild animals.

Once it officially opens later this year, the group will make the site available for visits from local schools and other community groups.

## Festive fun in the park

In the lead-up to Christmas, we were delighted to support a very special festive event for the attendees of Centre in the Park.

The centre is a place where the older people of Hemel Hempstead, Dacorum and beyond come together to socialise. As a special Christmas treat,



“ We supported their festive fun event by providing entertainment in the form of a vintage singer, Jessica De Giudici, a quiz and a free raffle ”

we supported their festive fun event by providing entertainment in the form of a vintage singer, Jessica De Giudici (left), a quiz and a free raffle.

## Walthamstow's 'Sunken Garden' gets a big lift



**Walthamstow volunteers – including local children and young people – have been working hard to help us tidy up the 'Sunken Garden' at Atlee Terrace.**

The volunteers weeded and pruned, swept up leaves and carried out general tidying to improve the area and make it more usable for the surrounding community.

But it wasn't just their labour we were after! We also wanted their ideas. Contemporary arts

organisation, the Drawing Shed, carried out activities on the day to encourage the volunteers and other members of the community to share their ideas on how the garden could be further improved in the future, with a particular focus on exploring how it could reflect the different communities represented in the area.

The Drawing Shed also used the event to gather local residents' ideas on how to improve and develop the garden.



# Education, culture and employment



“ After the work was completed, it was hugely rewarding for us to see the students making use of their green space  
Neal Allison, Osborne ”

improvements. Equipment supplier Speedy Hire provided the tools for the job, including a mini digger, free of charge.

Neal Allison, Community Investment Manager for Osborne, said: "It was inspiring to see how hard everyone worked to install the path, which will enable safer and easier access for the young people who have disability challenges.

## Allotment makeover leaves students full of beans!

**We work hard to make a positive difference in communities. Building strong relationships with schools and supporting local education is a big part of this.**

Over time, we have built a good relationship with Whitefield Academy in Waltham Forest, which supports students with special educational needs.

So when their students were looking for help to improve the school allotments, we were only too happy to get involved.

Along with our partners, Aston Group, we paid for and carried out work to build a new path, create raised vegetable beds, fix the greenhouse, repaint and create new potting tables for the allotment, which is an important part of school life. Our own volunteers – Koz

Ali (carpenter), Jose Julio Pimenta Snr (grounds worker), William McNally (apprentice) and Shaquille Simpson (apprentice) – worked alongside the students to carry out the



"It was personally rewarding too for the team to work with the Whitefield students, making some raised veg beds, giving the students the opportunity to safely experience the use of saws and drills, and adding finishing touches to their new allotment path."

Whitefield Academy's Dawn Groome said: "The teachers and students at Whitefield are so grateful to Osborne and Astons. Their help with the allotment has helped us to complete the project at a much faster rate than we could ever have achieved on our own. It's beginning to feel like a proper allotment now and a decent space for our students to learn in and enjoy."

"Not only that, the experience was such a positive one for the students. They came back into school full of enthusiasm and asking when they could do work like that again!"

“ *It's beginning to feel like a proper allotment now and a decent space for our students to learn in and enjoy*  
**Dawn Groome,**  
**Whitefield Academy** ”



## Singing with one voice

During a recent visit to one of our sheltered schemes, Osborne's Sarak Askey spotted an opportunity to support a local elderly people's choir – the Showcase Players – who regularly rehearse and perform at the scheme, and for charities and at events.

They were talking about how a lot of their money (which they raise themselves) goes on printing out lyrics for their audiences. We stepped in and now the choir have their very own lyrics booklets. They are over the moon!

## College students work to improve local homes

**West Hertfordshire College students Isla Barnard and Owen Hedger have joined us for a GAP experience placement, supporting the maintenance of Dacorum Borough Council homes.**

Following their successful application, the two were offered the opportunity to work with us every Tuesday for 12 weeks.

Isla and Owen have been spending time with Osborne's trades operatives; our frontline staff who deliver a reactive maintenance service to Dacorum Borough Council Housing tenants. As part of the experience, Isla and Owen are also learning about the importance of customer experience, health and safety and safeguarding

policies which are all vital to working in social housing and construction.

The students will go on to spend time with repairs supervisors, building surveyors and site managers to gain greater understanding of the roles they could progress to in their line of work. In their last few weeks, they will choose the role they would like to focus on to complete their placement.

Isla felt the placement was "a good opportunity to get real life experience and the potential to get an apprenticeship down the line".

Owen was pleased with how things are going so far saying "I'm working with Osborne and that's great for my CV, but I'm also picking up customer service and job management skills."

“ *It is difficult to obtain high quality and meaningful work experience, which helps [students] develop their employability skills ... This brings tangible benefits for our students, particularly around building their confidence and promoting social mobility*  
**Sue Hill, West Hertfordshire College** ”



## Students feel the pressure

**It wasn't quite The Apprentice, but we did give students a fair grilling when we went into two Waltham Forest schools to carry out mock interviews and help pupils to become more interview-ready.**

And just to up the stakes slightly, we invited a local politician, Councillor Khevyn Limbajee, to be part of our team.

Along with other businesses in the area, we had been invited to carry out mock interviews as part of the

schools' efforts to promote job opportunities and prepare their students for the world of work.

"We're always pleased to support the schools in this way," explains Carol Bailey, Managing Director of Osborne Property Services.

"It's a useful way for businesses to support their local community; something which is really important to us. It's also an opportunity for us to spot potential future talent for our own business."

## Winnall Primary pupils see construction in action

**Twelve pupils from Winnall Primary School in Winchester had the opportunity to get really close to the action when we invited them to Moorside Road – a build project which will provide 239 beds for Winchester students – to see work in progress.**

The visit started with an induction and the pupils quickly latched onto the idea of safety. When asked why mobile phones were banned on site, one boy quickly replied, "You might be texting and drop a brick on someone's head and hurt them!" They also likened the need for good site housekeeping to their own school playground rules.

After their induction the pupils had a site tour. Two pupils, Amelia and Isaac, had a go at bricklaying under the watchful eye of George Barnett (above). Kirsty and Emma then brought out a noise meter to demonstrate how noisy a room full of children could be! The noise levels reached a deafening 106 decibels (compared to a normal level of 70!).

An opportunity for Q&As kept the team on their toes: "How much are you paid?", "Who is your best friend?" and "How does the tower crane driver go to the toilet?"

Back at school, the pupils shared what they had learnt in a special assembly.

# Small jobs, big impact

**Our HandyPerson service, which we introduced in Waltham Forest last year, has now been rolled out to Winchester and Dacorum.**

Two days in, Community Matters caught up with Hemel Hempstead-based operative Jim Donnelly to learn more about the service and how it will help residents.

**CM: What do you want the service to achieve?**

**Jim:** The service has been designed to support vulnerable people by carrying out odd jobs for them. We hope this will help residents to be safe and live independently for longer in their homes.

**CM: What kind of jobs will you be doing?**

**Jim:** We'll be doing simple jobs around the home – like putting up shelves, or building flat-pack furniture, for example. I'm expecting that no two days will be the same!

**CM: Tell us about what you've been up to so far today ...**

**Jim:** My first visit was to hang an internal door. My second was to build a platform to raise up a fridge-freezer for a resident whose disability was making it painful for him to reach down to the fridge. And I've just come back from putting up bunk-beds for two girls who were absolutely delighted!

**CM: What difference do you think the service makes?**

**Jim:** I think it makes a huge difference. The second visit of today – to the disabled man's home – really illustrates how a job that is relatively

simple for us can change someone's quality of life. He was really pleased with the result and said not having to bend down means he can now use his fridge without being in pain. He said he was having to leave the milk out on the side and it kept going off, but now he won't have to.

**We're already getting plenty of positive feedback about how the service is helping people ...**

**“ I have been waiting for four years to get my mirror up – great job**

**Deanne**

*Thank you for fitting my door mirror and wall clock, thank you*

**Margaret**

*Thank you Winchester City Council and Osborne, for cleaning, draining my washing machine as I cannot kneel down to do it*

**M Read**

*Just to say that Osborne and Winchester Council have done a fantastic job, putting up my pictures and my three shelves, I couldn't be happier. Thank you for a great job*

**Pauline**



# Apprentices make their mark



“ What I have learnt so far has helped me grow within my chosen field. It has given me the confidence to progress and the hunger to learn and do more ”  
**Aaron Maskell,**  
apprentice

local people as part of our long-term contracts.

“As well as providing employment opportunities in our local communities, apprenticeships allow us to grow our own pool of talent to meet the needs of our business in the future. This is especially important with the shortage of skilled tradespeople within the industry. But our apprenticeships aren't just focused on trade skills; they are as varied as Customer Service, Contact Centre, Surveyors and Business Administrators.”

Aaron Maskell has worked at the firm for just over three years and has recently embarked on a Level 2 supply chain operations apprenticeship, supported by Central Sussex College.

Aaron said: “What I have learnt so far has helped me grow within my chosen field. It has given me the confidence to progress and the hunger to learn and do more.

“Doing an apprenticeship isn't like being back at school or college, as you are learning something that you want to develop a career in.”

**To mark National Apprenticeship Week in March we ran our annual Apprenticeship Awards to celebrate the huge success and commitment of our apprentices.**

We also got them out and about in the community and involved in a whole range of activities. In Walthamstow, this included helping to build a cycle workshop for use by young offenders at the Higham Hill Hub and erecting a pergola and seating in the allotment at the Whitefield Academy, a special educational needs school.

At Osborne Property Services we're really serious about apprenticeships and the opportunities they offer. Right now, we are supporting 39 apprentices across the business in a variety of roles, from maintenance operatives to managers, business administrators and surveyors.

Osborne's Training and Development Coordinator, Caz Callam, explains:

“Apprentices are important to our business and an important part of what we are able to offer

## Meet our apprentices



### James

James joined Osborne two years ago as an apprentice plumber. Under the guidance of his mentors, he spends most of his time carrying out repairs in customers' properties. Spending a day a week at Bedford College enables James to build his knowledge and skills which he then puts into practice every day. James is due to complete his apprenticeship in July.

A resident recently wrote to Osborne about James and his mentor, Kevin: "The reason for this letter is to let you know about the rapport between your plumber and your apprentice. Everything was explained, as the job proceeded and the apprentice was fully involved in an active role, I overheard the proceedings and was very impressed. This young man will achieve a lot with tuition like this. A credit to them both and you."



### Joe

Joe lives in Waltham Forest and joined the contract last summer to undertake a surveying apprenticeship. He works with the Osborne Voids Team four days a week and attends Barking and

Dagenham College one day a week, where he learns about construction and the built environment.

As part of his apprenticeship, Joe will gain BTEC and NVQs at Level 3. These qualifications will allow him to progress to further study, enabling him to achieve chartered status in the future. There is a shortage of chartered surveyors in the industry, so Joe is set for a bright and successful future.

Joe says: "The best part of my apprenticeship has been the ability to communicate with people and take pride in doing something worthwhile in the environment I live in. Some of these properties have been severely mistreated, and it's a nice feeling helping provide families with decent homes."



### Marcelle

Marcelle has been with Osborne for some time. She took on the role of service recovery specialist in 2015 and recognised the need to

upgrade her skills and knowledge. The business administration apprenticeship was ideal as it offered a wide variety of topics to choose from, which enabled Marcelle to easily identify those that would best suit her role. Marcelle undertook her apprenticeship with training provider Smart Training and her assessor visited every six weeks.

With some recent changes to her role and the opportunity to take on more responsibility, Marcelle is about to embark on a Level 3 management apprenticeship.

She says: "I would say go for it to anyone who is thinking about doing an apprenticeship."





# Health and wellbeing



on people's faces. I got to interact with the service users discussing what I was doing and what they enjoyed about the lunch that we were cooking for them and how appreciative they were of our efforts.

**Will**

"Using your development day allows you to give something back to the communities we work in. You discover new things and feel better for doing it."

"Working together to tight deadlines to ensure we dished up a lovely roast dinner was great fun and helped us bond as a team, sharing and learning from each other outside of the normal working environment."

**Mine**

"This was a great opportunity to do something good for others and sharing the experience with my colleagues made it even more special."

“Lunch is the busiest time of the day at Trinity, and we serve around 250 meals every week.

The volunteers from Osborne have made a huge difference to our client group"

**Sue McKenna,**  
Operations Director, Trinity Winchester

## Supporting the homeless

Earlier this year, three members of the Osborne team - Will Hughes, Business Excellence Director; Vickie Stevenson, ICT Manager; and Mine Meech, Cost Controller – were thrown in at the deep end when they volunteered to cover the kitchen at

homeless charity Trinity Winchester. Their task: to prepare 50 roast pork dinners for the lunch-time sitting! Here's what they said about the experience:

**Vickie**

"It was fantastic to utilise my cooking skills to put a smile



## Boothby Court residents enjoy the festivities

We were delighted to support the Waltham Forest Council team's Christmas celebrations at the Boothby Court retirement community. In full festive costume, we hung decorations, served food and drinks to the residents and helped with the big clear-up!



## Getting kids on the right track

**We've been working with Higham Hill Bike Club in Waltham Forest to build the bases for its soon-to-arrive community cycle repair workshop and classroom.**

In an exciting project, the club is working with young offenders to take in bikes

that have been recovered by police and not claimed by their owners, as well as ex-police bikes.

The team then repair the bikes and make them safe, ready for the bike safety courses that are part of this initiative to encourage healthy living.

## Farm to Fork

**We met Hemel Hempstead Tesco's Community Champion at a recent community event who asked if we could help to create two vegetable beds for their store.**

They wanted the beds as part of their Farm to Fork initiative, which involves local school students visiting the store to learn all about how food ends up on their shelves. Our veg beds were to be used to grow herbs in the store as a way of demonstrating to the students where food comes from.

We were keen to use recycled materials for the beds and one of our staff members, Andy Adkins, spent a day building them up in the warehouse out of pallets. Once complete, we delivered the beds to Tesco and helped staff to fill them with soil and herbs just in time for a school visit that day ...





are to really appreciate the value of what they have learned and how these skills will ultimately support their career goals.

High levels of employer expectation and customer service, is something that West Herts College lecturers talk about regularly and embed into lessons. It is great for students to see first hand how employer expectations shape the work they do with Osborne.

Interview sessions provided by Osborne, in which many students have participated, have undoubtedly helped students focus on what employers are looking for and how they can best present themselves when applying for employment and apprenticeship positions.

#### What's your aim working with Osborne in the long term?

Long term, I'm certain that West Herts College and Osborne can build on an already effective working relationship, creating even more opportunities for our students to grow. The benefits to the School of Building Services, its students, staff and the local community are invaluable.

## Building confidence and experience for our next generation

**Recognising the huge skills shortage in our industry, we have teamed up with West Herts College to explore ways to promote the diverse career opportunities within construction. We have welcomed students on work experience placements to help them gain skills for their career aspirations.**

**Glenn Roger, Head of School (Building Services), West Herts College shares his opinion on the huge benefits of the partnership.**

#### Who will benefit from the partnership?

It is our students who ultimately benefit from the Osborne and West Herts College partnership. Students who have spent time with Osborne share their experiences with their peers with enthusiasm, which helps them identify the value and importance of high quality work experience, in a real working environment.

#### What are the true benefits of work placements?

The opportunity to use and refine newly developed skills in a real working environment, it is essential if students

*“ Students who have spent time with Osborne share their experiences with their peers with enthusiasm, which helps them identify the value and importance of high quality work experience, in a real working environment. ”*



## Hands-on support for AgeUK Dacorum

We have an ongoing role as Business Advisors for AgeUK Dacorum following its successful bid for Local Sustainability funding.

It's been a busy start to the year, with us supporting the charity to consult its volunteers on how they can improve their induction programme in January, and carrying out a journey-mapping exercise for the users and carers of its Cogs programme in February. The programme supports a group of people with dementia and their carers, and our project involved collecting feedback for the charity to use in bids and to pass on to its volunteers. From this we have created a thank-you video from the service users to volunteers. AgeUK Dacorum says it values the

external support that is helping it to transform the charity. Melanie Clarke, the charity's Community Support Manager, said: "A big thank you! It was very useful to get the feedback from the carers and clients. It was good to hear how much they enjoy Cogs and for you to realise how great the need is, as well as the difficulties and stress the carers have to endure – it was good for them to meet other carers that are going through similar pressures and be able to share ideas and stories. I am hoping the feedback we get from you will help us when applying for funding to open more groups. I have to say the way you interacted so naturally with the clients and the carers is lovely to see."



## Upcoming events

### 18th May

Career Event 'Professional Men's Day' Kelmscott School

### 14th May

Cycle Hub Opening with Dacorum Borough Council

### 16th June

Residents Celebration BBQ at Sursham Court Scheme

### 3rd July

Mock Interviews at Fredrick Bremer School

### 8th July

Sunnyside Rural Trust Summer Fete

### 29th July

Waltham Forest Residents Day

### 29th July

Winchester Fun Day

## Community Matters

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