

Strictly Come Cartrefi celebration

The cake was cut and the guests joined in singing “Happy Birthday” – but this was a party with a difference.

For the celebrations in Towyn were to mark the first birthday of Cartrefi Conwy, the housing association which, in September 2008, took over responsibility for 3,800 council houses from Conwy County Borough Council.

Cartrefi Conwy has now embarked on a massive £30 million housing improvement programme which aims to bring every property up to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard by 2012.

The festivities were, in fact, divided between two venues and invitations had been extended to all tenants.

About 100 attended the tea dance at Llandudno’s Grand Hotel and later the same day about 70 joined in the party at the North Coast Church Centre in Gors Road, Towyn.

The atmosphere at both venues was celebratory, with couples dancing to the familiar strains of Victor Sylvester and Glenn Miller, joining in singing popular old songs and enjoying a couple of games of bingo before tucking into the birthday cake, which was topped by a single candle.

Leading the singing were husband-and-wife Phil and Lona Batty, themselves residents at Cartrefi Conwy’s Kennedy Court in Old Colwyn, while the bingo caller was another resident, Margaret Richardson, who often fills the same role for her neighbours at the Parkway complex in Rhos-on-Sea.

Transport had been laid on for tenants from as far afield as Llanrwst and Llanfairfechan, many of whom were accompanied by the wardens of their accommodation, and all agreed that both parties had been a huge success.

Among the first on the dancefloor at the Towyn party were longstanding friends Brenda Cody and Jean Morris, who were in their element as both are keen dancers.

“This is brilliant,” said Jean, 75, who lives in Cae Mor, Towyn. “We could do with having something like this more often and it’s a great idea for Cartrefi Conwy to put this on.

Also displaying some nimble footwork was 77-year-old Dennis Betney, who used to do a lot of dancing in his youth.

He shared the floor with the chairman of Cartrefi Conwy's Board Pam Lonie, of Abergele, whom he had never met before.

"I was always a quick worker," he quipped.

The birthday cake at the Towyn party was cut by Brian and Shirley Heap, of Glanmorfa, Towyn, who celebrate their 52nd wedding anniversary on October 6th.

Mrs Lonie said she was delighted with the response to the invitations.

"I felt it was right that we should celebrate our first birthday with the tenants, who are at the heart of our organization, as it's important that we remember that Cartrefi Conwy is about more than just buildings," she said.

She said that the first 12 months of the Association being in control of the housing stock – a decision made through a tenants' vote – had gone extremely well, with the housing improvement programme now well underway.

"I was very touched recently to receive a letter from one tenant thanking us for having installed a new boiler as it was the first time she knew she was guaranteed to be warm this winter," said Mrs Lonie.

"I'm really pleased to see everyone enjoying themselves so much at the party," she added.