



Rutherglen & Cambuslang Housing Association

Newsletter Summer 2011

Association helps out with Garden Maintenance

In April 2011, the Association received notification that South Lanarkshire Council's Free Care of Garden Scheme had ended. Following discussion, the Associations Management Committee decided that the Association should take on responsibility for tenants, who through old age or disability could not manage their gardens.

The Association went on to appoint one of our own garden contractors (C.M.C. Contracts) who have now started the work which will assist over 50 of our tenants to better manage their gardens over the summer months.



See inside for more details....

Tenant Survey Results – Your views on the Associations Service!

We have now completed our latest Tenant Satisfaction Survey and we have some draft results that we wanted to provide you with prior to the final report being published in the next few weeks.

The keys points identified by the independent company we employed to carry out the survey are detailed here:-

- » In total 575 Tenants participated in the survey.
- » Generally Tenants were extremely satisfied with the service provided by Rutherglen and Cambuslang Housing Association.
- » In total 93% of Tenants indicated that they were either very satisfied or satisfied with the service provided by the Association.
- » All tenants surveyed-100%- stated that it was easy to report a repair.
- » A total of 98% of tenants thought that the Association was good at keeping tenants informed about its activities and services.
- » Of tenants surveyed, 99% felt that staff listened to their concerns.
- » There was 100% satisfaction with the service provided at the office reception.
- » In terms of their neighbourhood, 86% of tenants indicated that they were satisfied.
- » All 96% tenants who read the newsletter, find it easy to read.
- » 81% of tenants are aware of how to become members of the Management Committee
- » A total of 88% of tenants are satisfied with the overall design and layout of their home.
- » Although 34% of tenants indicated that they would like to buy their home through Right to Buy, this was an aspiration rather than an intention.

We would like to stress again that your views are very important and will help in the analysis that will be carried out to show us where we need to do more to improve our service.

During this process more in depth analysis will take place covering any issues that may need some follow-up work or focus groups if this is appropriate. Once again we very much appreciate the time that everyone took to participate in the survey.

Citizens advice Bureau Surgery in Association

The Citizens Advice Bureau has opened a Drop in Service within Rutherglen and Cambuslang Housing Associations office, every Tuesday between 10am and 1pm and 2pm to 3.30pm.

No appointment is necessary, so please call in if you need any help or advice regarding Benefits Advice, Benefit Checks, Gas and Electricity Advice, Housing Issues, Family Issues, Debt Advice, Consumer Issues or Employment.



Free, Impartial Advice on Managing Your Money

Local Citizens Advice Bureau help Rutherglen & Cambuslang residents become smarter with their money.

Getting help with finances is getting a bit easier across Cambuslang and Rutherglen.

The **Money Advice Service** has now launched their new face to face service across South Lanarkshire, with services being delivered by the area's Citizens Advice Bureau.

The aim is to ensure that everyone has access to advice on how to better manage their money and make more informed decisions about their personal finance.

This is a free, confidential and impartial service offering advice on a whole range of money issues from managing your day to day money, to longer term planning for your retirement.

The service covers a wide range of topics including – **basic budgeting (maximising your income and reducing expenditure), savings, borrowing, pensions, tax, insurance and benefits.**

Advice is provided by a fully accredited Money Adviser and is tailored to the individual needs and priorities of the client. There will be no attempt to sell or recommend any products or services.

The service is designed to be preventative and educational. Although it does not provide on-going debt management, general advice on borrowing and consolidation is available and the service offers valuable online tools, calculators and product comparisons via their website – **www.moneyadvice.org.uk**

A referral form must be fully completed and this can be arranged by contacting the Housing Association direct.

Online Housing Benefit /Council Tax Calculator

South Lanarkshire Council are promoting an online system which enables applicants to check their entitlement to Housing Benefit and Council Tax at any time.

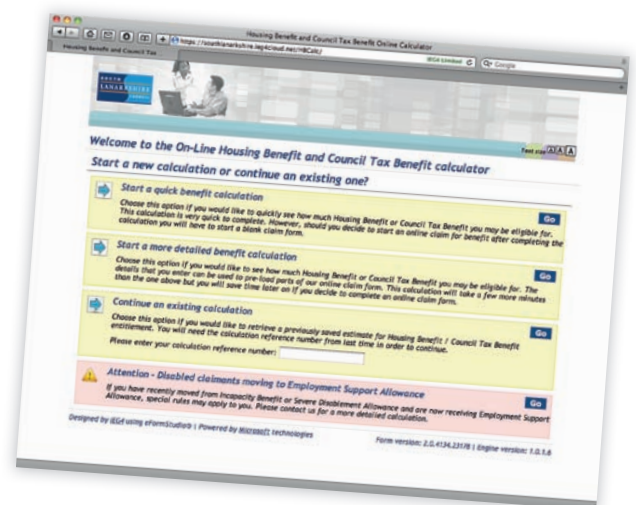
The online calculator will:-

- » Let you know if you are entitled to Housing and Council Tax benefit before you submit an application form.
- » Give you an idea of how much benefit you could be entitled to.
- » Save you from wasting time and effort filling out forms for benefit you may not be entitled to.

The online application form will:-

- » Let you complete your application for Housing or Council Tax Benefit over the internet and submit the completed form securely by email.
- » Allow you to only complete the sections that are relevant to your circumstances.
- » Let you partially complete the form and save it for up to four weeks before final completion.

The online calculator and application form can be found at **www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk** and help can be obtained over the phone by calling **0303 123 1011**.



Policy Spotlight

In previous Newsletters we have been introducing some of our policies to raise greater awareness of our work. We will continue to include this feature in the future as we want to continue to display openness and accountability within our service provision. Hopefully this will help people better understand our work, to be able to assess its effectiveness and ultimately encourage more people to contribute ideas or suggestions to help the Association improve on future service delivery.

Here we have included some general information on some of the main sections within our **Permission to Reside** Policy.

Any tenant, wishing another person to move into the property requires the written consent of the Association. The tenancy agreement states that permission will not be unreasonably withheld. Any application should be made on the appropriate form, along with documentary evidence confirming the applicant's current and previous addresses over the past 3 years. The Association will require full details of the applicant's current and previous housing circumstances, as checks will be made with previous landlords and other agencies.

We will respond to applications within 14 days to either accept, reject or request further information relating to the application, and aim to conclude an application within 28 days of receipt.

We will not unreasonably refuse permission to reside. Reasonable grounds for refusing permission includes the following:

- » we have served a notice on you warning that we may seek eviction on certain grounds because of your conduct;
- » we have obtained an order for your eviction;
- » the proposed change would lead to the criminal offence of overcrowding. If it is established that false or misleading information has been provided or relevant information has been withheld.

These examples do not in any way alter our general right to refuse permission on reasonable grounds. The following grounds relate to the incoming applicant and mirror the responsibilities that the Association places on applicants within our Allocations process:-

- » Anyone who has been violent or has used abusive or threatening behaviour to an Association staff member.
- » Anyone who has been evicted by a previous landlord, or is the subject of an Anti Social Behaviour Order.
- » Where Eviction or A.S.B.O's are an issue, a Senior Housing Officer will have discretion to consider and offer advice on probationary or supported accommodation in certain circumstances where appropriate to assist an applicants opportunity to obtain future rehousing
- » Anyone or their spouse, partner or family members included in the application who have had previous convictions or have pending convictions for any offence in connection with the use or supply of any controlled drugs or has been convicted of using previous accommodation for any immoral or illegal purposes.
- » Anyone who has more than one months rent arrears/former rent arrears, or who has not maintained an arrangement to clear former tenant rent arrears for a continuous period of 3 months.
- » Anyone who has given false or misleading information with relevance to the outcome of their application or withheld relevant information in order to obtain a tenancy will have their application suspended for a period of 6 months from the date of the disclosure.
- » Failure to allow a risk assessment to be carried out (where appropriate) or where essential housing support is deemed necessary, but has been refused or not provided.

In the event of permission being granted, the tenant will be held responsible for the conduct of all members of the household.

This feature is not designed to provide you with a comprehensive guide to this Policy but is more of an introduction of what is involved. This will help to enable anyone interested in making suggestions or finding out more about a particular policy to contact our office or check out our website.

Garden Maintenance

Continued from front page

This on-going responsibility to assist certain groups will be controlled via the conditions set out in a procedure note and subject to an annual review of the applicants circumstances prior to the start of each garden season.

Conditions for entry to the scheme - The scheme is only available to tenants (with no one over the age of 16 living with them), as follows:

- » People over 70 years of age
- » People over 65 years and in receipt of Attendance Allowance
- » In receipt of War Pension
- » Pensioners with a medical letter

Anyone under pensionable age, (with no one over the age of 16 living with them), will need to meet one of the following criteria:

- » Registered Blind
- » In receipt of Disabled Living Allowance
- » Be in possession of a blue badge
- » In receipt of a medical letter stating the following illnesses:
 - » Stroke
 - » MS
 - » Rheumatoid Arthritis
 - » Recent heart surgery
 - » Kidney disease (requiring dialysis)
 - » Being on oxygen for respiratory disease



The Association will assess garden maintenance demand at the beginning of each year when tenants will be invited to submit a request form, providing documentary proof of age, disability etc. During the first year (2011/12) the Association will comply with the garden list that has been passed to us via South Lanarkshire Council. Any subsequent new applications during the year will be invited to re-apply when the list details are refreshed at the turn of the year.

If tenants comply with the attached criteria one of the Associations contractors will be instructed to carry out 7 cuts per year inclusive of 2 cuts to any hedging if necessary. The Associations contractor will only cut grass and hedging during these visits and will not be responsible for shrubs, flowerbeds, trees etc.

Cutting junk mail and calls

You can take some simple steps to cut the number of unsolicited offers you receive by post, phone and email. This will make it harder for the scammers to reach you and it will give you the confidence to treat any offers you do receive with extra caution.

Mailings – Reduce the number of unsolicited letters and other mailings you get by registering for free with the Mailing Preference Service at www.mpsonline.org.uk or by phoning **0845 703 4599**.

Telephone Calls – Reduce the number of unsolicited phone calls you get by registering your phone number free with the Telephone Preference Service at www.tpsonline.org.uk or by phoning **0845 070 0707**. You could also ask your telephone company to block callers who withhold their number. (Office of Fair Trading).

Bulk Uplift – New Arrangements

Many people will already be aware that South Lanarkshire Council have changed the arrangements for bulk uplift. On an annual basis residents will now only be allowed one free uplift per year with any subsequent uplifts being charged at £40 per time. The new telephone number to contact The Cleansing Department is 0303 123 1020.

However, South Lanarkshire Councils Rutherglen and Cambuslang Recycling Centre based at Eastfield is open 7 days per week and there are no charges in place for the areas residents wishing to discard their own bulk items.

On a separate note we continue to receive calls on a regular basis about wheelie bins not being returned to their proper place after the Cleansing uplift. As well as detracting from the appearance of the area this can cause obstruction for pedestrians and leaves the bins open to possible theft or vandalism. We would ask for everyone's co-operation to avoid this situation occurring in the future.

Pensioners Bus Trip to Traquair House & Peebles Hydro

Frid 26th August 2011

Are you a tenant of pensionable age and interested in a free Day Out?, then please contact Angela at the Association on 0141 647 4917 as soon as possible to secure the last few remaining places on our Annual Pensioners Day Out.

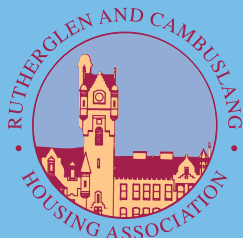
Staff Changes at the Association

Everyone at the Association was sad to see our colleague Claire Tainsh resign her post of Housing Assistant recently after 3 years at the Association. We would all like to offer our best wishes to Claire as she embarks on a new life 'down under' in Perth, Australia.



The vacant post within the Housing Management Team has now been filled and Paula Boyle (pictured) took up the Housing Assistant post in mid June. Congratulations to Paula on her appointment and no doubt many of our tenants will get the chance to speak to Paula over the course of the next few months.

Another member of staff who will be leaving us at the end of June is Margaret Brooks, the Association's Finance Manager who is retiring. Margaret has worked for the Association for 29 years and joined us as our 3rd staff member in 1982 when we had our office at 47 Stonelaw Road. Some of our 'older' tenants may remember Margaret from those days, sitting in the corner pouring over her calculator and ledgers – it was to be a few years before we got our first computer. The staff and committee are grateful for Margaret's contribution to the work of the Association and wish her a long and happy retirement.



Rutherglen & Cambuslang Housing Association

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