Summer 2014

Tenant Panel Meeting

The next Tenant Panel Meeting will be held on Wednesday 6th August at 6pm – at the Maitlandfield Hotel Haddington

We will be holding the next meeting on 3rd July and are looking for more tenants to be part of your Tenant Panel. This meeting will look at:

- Review of Tenant Participation for 2013-2014 – setting new targets for Action (Review enclosed)
- Remit of the Tenant Panel
- Annual Performance review
- The next Large Scale Tenant Survey – be part of testing the questionnaire.
- Social Charter – which charter indicators would you like us to report to you on? How would you like to see your services improve,?
- Policies that require review this year
  Compensation for Improvements Policy
  Planned Maintenance Policy
  Unacceptable Action Policy & Procedure
- Amendments to Anti-social Behaviour Policy

We will be pleased to offer help with transport and childcare costs. We will send out tenant meeting response slips nearer the time but we’d be glad if you would put the date in your diary!
What is the aim of an estate walkabout?

Estate walkabouts happen to give tenants and officers the chance to work together to identify improvement you would like to see in your development which will make it a better place to live.

The estate walkabouts took place during the month of May 2014. Thank you to all of you who made it along and those who were unable to, but passed on your suggestions and comments.

The main issues identified were in relation to the communal landscaping and grass cutting. ISS did have a delayed start this year and a lot of the issues picked up during the walkabouts have now been attended to whilst the landscapers have been out on their routine visits.

The completed action plans will be sent out to each development to let you know about the issues identified on the day.

James will be out and about over the next month looking for gardens to photograph for this years community pride awards and is happy for suggestions to be sent to info@homesforlife.co.uk for gardens to look out for!

Community Pride Awards 2014

Again this year we will be awarding Prizes and Certificates to recognise the contribution tenants and communities have made for everybody’s benefit.

Enclosed is a nomination card. If you have a neighbour who makes a difference to your community, who has made a particular effort with their garden or to a communal area, please let us know! If you would like us to consider your garden or community effort please feel free to nominate yourself.

Nominations are open until the 15th August, and winners will be announced at our Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 10th September 2014 at the Maitlandfield Hotel.

If emailing us please put Estate Walkabout in the subject line and send it in to info@homesforlife.co.uk

Enclosed is your 1st Quarter Rent statement

Your rent is charged one month in advance and your tenancy agreement states this should be paid on or before the 1st of each month. Your statement has been printed including transactions up to 3rd July which means your account has a zero balance unless you are in arrears or are in receipt of Housing Benefit as this is paid 4 weekly in arrears.

If you have any problems understanding your statement please don’t hesitate to contact Hilary, James, Jennifer or Caroline who will be happy to talk it through with you.
Thank you to all the tenants who took the time to complete and return the survey’s we sent out asking for updated household information. The prize draw was taken by the Customer Service Committee on 12th June. We are very pleased to announce the winners as follows:

1st Prize of £75 goes to – Helen Bald, Smiddy Wynd East Linton
3 Prizes of £50 go to – Christopher McDonald, Walden Terrace Gifford
  – Charles Edmond, Barga Court, Cockenzie
  – Eliz Salkeld Barga Court Cockenzie

4 Prizes of £25 go to – Colin Stoddart, Goldenstones Dunbar
  – Tony James, MacFarlane Court, Elphinstone
  – Ann Creedican, Goldenstones Avenue, Dunbar
  – Joan Kerr, Limeylands Court, Gullane

Repairs Satisfaction
As part of the “Any Changes” survey we took the opportunity to ask tenants about satisfaction with R3 reactive repairs service as we were aware of a number of significant changes that had taken place with the contractor. We were concerned these recent changes were having an impact on the service tenant’s were receiving.

This survey showed only 69.4% overall satisfaction with the repairs service. This is an 18% drop from the 88.1% reported in the full survey back in October 2013 for which we had achieved over 50% response rate. However this does not mirror the responses received to the individual satisfaction questionnaires sent out after every repair the 4th quarter. Those which showed improved levels of satisfaction in the 4th quarter following a dip in the 3rd quarter

Right first Time
Both in terms of expressed dissatisfaction and preferred priority the Regulator’s new “Right First Time” Indicator has proved the most important aspect of repairs to our tenants. It attracted the highest dissatisfaction at 22.2% and was the highest priority for tenants.

For a repair to qualify as Right First Time it must meet 3 criteria:
- It must be completed to the tenant’s satisfaction
- Completed within the target timescale
- Accurately diagnosed and resolved with NO subsequent visit within 12 months.

We will discuss this in more detail at the tenant meeting on 6th August. We will share our findings with R3 and continue to closely monitor satisfaction returns to ascertain if this was a drop in service for a specified period while the contractor was experiencing difficulties or if this is a more general reduction in service standards and requires action
Planned Maintenance Programme 2014/15

We have budgeted to spend around £260,000 on planned works between April 2013 and March 2014. This includes our first phase of Kitchen Improvements and Shower Installations, and other works which we had hoped to carry out last year. Our apologies for the delay in implementing these. Please be assured this has not had any impact on implementation of other planned works.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What</th>
<th>Where</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>External Painter work</td>
<td>110 homes and 6 closes at: St Andrew Street &amp; Forth Street, North Berwick; Muirfield Gardens &amp; Drive, Gullane, Walden Place &amp; Terrace, Gifford; Goose Green, Musselburgh. <em>(already underway)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Periodic Electrical Inspections</td>
<td>110 homes and 6 closes at: St Andrew Street &amp; Forth Street, North Berwick; Muirfield Gardens &amp; Drive, Gullane, Walden Place &amp; Terrace, Gifford; Goose Green, Musselburgh. <em>(already underway)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Servicing of storage heating</td>
<td>35 homes at: Walden Place &amp; Terrace, Gifford</td>
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<tr>
<td>Replacement kitchens <em>(and boilers where necessary)</em></td>
<td>For up to 19 homes at: Hares Close &amp; School Lane, Cockenzie; Longstone Avenue, East Linton. <em>(Only those homes which have not already had these replaced.)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>First time installations of showers.</td>
<td>For up to 14 homes at Hares Close &amp; School Lane, Cockenzie. <em>(Only those homes which have not already had these replaced.)</em></td>
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<td>Replacement of ensuite shower cabinets <em>(where necessary)</em></td>
<td>For up to 5 homes at: Longstone Avenue, East Linton. <em>(Only those homes which have not already had these replaced.)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Replacement of render /seal at external staircases to upper flats <em>(where necessary)</em></td>
<td>Up to 9 staircases at Goldenstones , Dunbar; Limeylands Court, Ormiston; Roodlands Court, Haddington; Muirfield Gardens, Gullane.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Environmental Improvements</td>
<td>Hare’s Close &amp; School Lane, Cockenzie</td>
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<td>Possible further energy efficiency measures *</td>
<td>Up to 10 trickle transfer homes which have air source heat pumps.</td>
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*(The Scottish Government has introduced a new Energy Efficiency Standard for Scottish Social Housing, to replace the current Scottish Housing Quality Standard. Preliminary checks have confirmed that only 10 of our homes may not meet the required standard- We will initially procure new Energy Performance Certificates for all 10 of these. We may then need to carry out further energy efficiency measures.)*

We will circulate a fully updated planned programme for the next 5 years later in the summer. We generally expect kitchens and boilers to have a 15 year life. Replacement is provisionally planned on that basis; however the actual order in which works are implemented will be dependant on inspections, and may need to be varied. Kitchens being replaced in this year’s programme have just reached or are approaching their 15th anniversary.

Anyone whose home is included in these works will be contacted with further detail before works are instructed.

Contractors will make any necessary access arrangements directly with tenants. Painterwork and Electrical contracts are already underway.
**Prestonkirk House**

We are delighted to welcome ten new tenants to our nine flats within Prestonkirk House, East Linton.

Prestonkirk House is a Category B listed building built 1864 as a Poor House. It was subsequently used as a home for people with learning difficulties. It had been derelict for many years before Homes for Life acquired it in February 2002. After conversion to 9 one bed flats and a community library, it was leased to East Lothian Council for use as temporary accommodation for homeless households.

It was been returned to the Company for mainstream use in May 2014. After a few initial problems tenant’s had with utility supplies, we hope they have settled into their new homes.

The flats were let under a special lettings plan agreed with East Lothian Council and East Lothian Housing Association to try and maximise tenancy sustainability and meet local community needs.

**DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT TODAY**

JOIN A CAR CLUB

If you don’t need to use a car every day, and if you drive less than 6,000 miles a year, it makes a lot of sense to join a car club. Save money, walk a bit more, and reduce your carbon emissions.

If you live in or near Haddington or Dunbar you could have access to a fuel-efficient car that a car club insures, cleans and services so you don’t have to. It costs only £25.00 to join, and a minimum £5.00 per month charge, and your membership allows you to use cars in either town, and indeed in other sister car clubs around the UK. Once you receive your smart card to access the cars you can book a car on-line at any town or on the phone during office hours. You receive a bill every month and pay by direct debit.

Easywheels Car Club Haddington ([www.easywheels.org.uk](http://www.easywheels.org.uk)) has two cars parked in the long-stay car park at Tesco’s. They cost £3.50 per hour and 21p per mile.

Sparewheels in Dunbar ([www.sparewheels.org.uk](http://www.sparewheels.org.uk)) has four cars parked in various locations including the train station. They have two automatic cars – one is an all-electric Nissan Leaf. Their charges are £4.75 per hour (£5.50 for the 7-seater Mazda) and 13p per mile. There is no fuel charge for the Nissan.

Both East Lothian clubs are community interest companies established for the benefit of the local community. Any profits are put back into the company. The booking and billing system is operated by Co-wheels which is based in Durham. There are some 2,000 cars in car clubs up and down the country. Once you join a Co-wheels car club you can use any of their cars anywhere in the UK.

A number of people have already expressed an interest in setting up a car club in North Berwick – if you think this would be useful to you, please get in touch with [morag@sparewheels.org.uk](mailto:morag@sparewheels.org.uk)

See the websites for more details. Or phone Co-wheels 0191 375 1050.
Benefit Changes - there’s help out there

Have you been affected by the recent changes to benefits or has your income reduced?

The Scottish Legal Aid Board (SLAB) has supported East Lothian Council to employ two new Tenancy Support Workers through SLAB’s ‘Making Advice Work Funding Programme. The posts are initially funded for a two-year period. They are based in the Homelessness Team’s offices in Musselburgh, and can see people there or meet them at a mutually convenient venue elsewhere in the county.

They specialise in helping council and housing association tenants who are struggling with changes to the benefits system, for example, accessing a range of welfare and housing benefits. Their role is to help people with budgeting and money management, source help with debt and access any funding that might be available, to try and make sure that tenants don’t lose their housing. If you have any concerns – don’t put off getting in touch.

Financial Help for those in serious hardship

East Lothian Council has funds to help in certain circumstances

- Discretionary Housing Benefit, this is short term help towards your rent
- Crisis Grants, help in an emergency for essential living expenses such as heating, food, nappies
- Community Care Grants, support independent living

None of these grants need to be paid back but there is strict criteria as to who is eligible, so there is no guarantee an application would be successful. However if you are struggling to meet you essential living costs it is definitely worth contacting ELC’s Welfare Fund.

For anyone in the county affected by changes to their benefits, there is also comprehensive advice online at www.eastlothian.gov.uk/welfarereform

Glasgow City Council has launched a Sanctions Appeal Pack

Glasgow City Council has produced an appeals pack for claimants wishing to appeal a range of benefit decisions by the DWP. The pack includes a checklist and sample letters for use in appeals and can be downloaded here http://www.glasgow.gov.uk/appealspack

East Lothian Foodbank

East Lothian Foodbank is run by the Trussell Trust and helps people who are struggling to afford food for themselves and their families.

The number of referrals has doubled in the last year and that the Scottish Welfare Fund, Social Work service and the two CABx are the main sources of referrals.

Once referred, clients then can go to the old library building at 3 Civic Square, Tranent on Tues, Wed, or Thurs mornings. The list of foods in each parcel have been designed by dieticians to provide recipients with nutritionally balanced food.

All food given out by foodbanks is donated. Often this is from schools, churches, businesses, individuals, or through supermarket collections.
A reminder of the new national phone line for non-emergency calls to the Police. The introduction of the 101 number provided the public with an easy to remember number to use when they want to contact police when an emergency response is not required.

The 101 number aims to take the strain off the 999 service by giving people an alternative way to report non-urgent crimes, pass on information or get advice. Calls to 101 will cost 15p from both landlines and mobile phones, with an automatic system detecting the caller's location before connecting them to their nearest available police station.

Police Scotland are asking the residents of East Lothian to keep an eye out for any suspicious activity as there have been a number of thefts from rural properties and an increase in housebreaking activity. The perpetrators are often using a bus to access and leave villages. If you see anything that seems out of place give the police a call on 101 with a description of the activity and where and when it happened.

An emergency call should be made to 999 when:
- A person is in immediate danger of injury or their life is at risk
- There is suspicion that a crime is in progress
- A building is on fire
- Another serious incident needs immediate emergency service attendance
- A suspect is nearby

A non-emergency call should be made to the new 101 number:
- To report the theft of a vehicle
- To report damage to property
- To report a minor traffic accident
- To give the police information about crime
- To report suspected drug use or drug dealing
- To speak to the police about a general inquiry

new FREE number - 111

NHS 24, Scotland’s provider of telephone and web based health advice and information, is now available on a new, free to call number: 111

If you are ill when your GP surgery is closed, either through the night or at the weekend, and you can’t wait until it reopens, you can call NHS 24 free on 111.

The new telephone number was launched at the end of April and means that people throughout Scotland can contact the service free of charge from a landline or mobile.
We use allpay.net to collect rent.

There are six ways you can pay your rent through allpay.net

In order to use any of the services other than Direct Debit you need your allpay card number. Don’t have one? Call us and we’ll order one for you.

Our preferred method of payment is Direct Debit.

1. By Direct Debit

All payments made by Direct Debit are guaranteed, this means that in the unlikely event a payment is made in error, you will receive a full and immediate refund. Please contact the office and we can arrange you direct debit over the phone.

2. Telephone Payments - contact telephone payments on: 0844 557 8321, You’ll need your allpay no. to hand.

3. Online at https://www.allpayments.net/allpayments/

4. By Card at various outlets – for example the Post Office or anywhere displaying the Paypoint logo

5. By your Smartphone Allpay have recently launched their new smartphone app. The app is available for Apple and Android smartphones and is free to download from the Apple App Store and Google Play (formerly the Android Market).

6. If you don’t have an Allpay number you can pay by telephoning the office and paying with your debit card (NOT credit card) through the Callpay system.

Telephone Numbers

1. DURING Office Hours

Phone R3 on 03000 999 247

2. OUT of Office Hours

Please remember that only repairs that cannot wait until the following morning to be reported should be called in after 5pm

PLEASE NOTE - if you call out an emergency repair which is either your responsibility or which is not a genuine emergency, the cost of the call out and the repair will be charged back to you.

3. GAS CENTRAL HEATING

Your gas central heating is covered by a contract with Kingdom Gas and if you experience any problems with your system you should call FREE on 0800 389 9463.

THINK YOU SMELL GAS?

If you think you can smell a gas leak, NEVER attempt to find a gas leak yourself. Instead contact National Grid Gas plc immediately on the following number – 0800 111 999

Anti-Social Behaviour Hotline – 0845 6018518 – Open 24 hours a day