



FORTH

Housing Association Ltd.

SpeakingForth

The newsletter of Forth Housing Association Ltd

September 2013

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Forth Housing Association Marks 25 Years

Members of Forth Housing Association recently celebrated the organisation's 25th anniversary, when they gathered for their AGM.

The meeting, which received an update on the last year's activities, approved the annual accounts and elected the Management Committee for the coming year.

Members heard that over its 25 year history the Association has provided over 700 affordable homes in and around Stirling. It has also matured into one of Scotland's top Housing Associations with some of the best performance results in the country.

A recent tenant satisfaction survey showed that not only is the Association operating very efficiently, it is able to provide services which are appreciated by its tenants. Overall satisfaction levels achieved a 94% satisfaction rating. Chairperson Margaret Turner stated:

"It is a great encouragement to us that Forth has matured into a well respected and effective



organisation. We now look forward to the next 25 years providing welcome homes and services for the people of Stirling".

Blooming Good Gardens!

The judging of this year's Good Garden Competition showed that there are many green fingered tenants out there who are making great efforts to brighten up their homes and surroundings.

We are pleased to announce that the winners of our £25 prizes are:

- Mr Duff, Riverside
- Mr McBride, Raploch

In addition a special prize was also issued to Mr Moffat at Monument View, to spend on the common areas, which he and some other tenants have been maintaining. We have also issued a number of "commended" certificates to households who'd made a grand effort to brighten their environment.



Mr Duff, Riverside



Mr McBride, Raploch

Committee Member Receives Commendation

We are pleased to announce that Gordon Mason, Secretary of our Management Committee, was awarded recently a commendation in the Committee Learner of the Year award from SHARE.

Gordon is pictured receiving his Certificate. Well done Gordon!



Are you Interested in Getting Your Dog Microchipped for Free?

Dogs Trust is a large dog welfare charity with 18 rehoming centres across the UK, 2 of which are in Glasgow and West Calder. There has recently been a change in law and by 2016 all dogs in England and Wales will have to be microchipped. Dogs Trust expects Scotland to follow suit and as a result are running a large campaign to support communities in preparation. Their campaign involves a team of 2 roaming vet nurses who will attend pre-existing events and microchip dogs for free.

Would you be interested in attending an event to have your dog microchipped for free?

If so, phone the office with your contact details together with the number of dogs you require microchipped.

Please also state whether you would prefer a week day Mon-Fri (9am-5pm) or a Sat (9am-1pm).



Patch and Staff Changes from 1st October 2013

You will notice a different face over the next six months, as it was agreed that Caroline Stevenson and Isabel Reilly will swap jobs from the 1st October 2013.

The secondment will last initially for six months with a possible extension. This arrangement will enable Isabel to support Caroline in her new duties. At the same time we are changing the 'patches' in which each Officer is responsible for rent arrears control, allocations and voids, shared ownership, tenancy conditions and estate management.

We are also changing our designated Estate Management visits from monthly to every two months. There should be no drop in our standards as Housing Officers will continue to visit developments on a regular basis, albeit for other reasons.

Elaine Shepherd, Housing Officer, has been with us for the past 16 years. Elaine will now be the Housing Officer for **Raploch, Cornton, Cambusbarron, Dunblane and Riverside also, Myles House, Tannery Lane/ Queen Street and Cowane Street, in Stirling.**



Elaine Shepherd

Caroline Stevenson, Housing Officer, has been with us for 10 years. Caroline will be the Housing Officer for **St Ninians, Bannockburn, Whins of Milton, Plean, Cowie, Fallin and Braehead also, Baker Street /Morris Terrace, Crosbies Court and Barn Road, in Stirling.**



Caroline Stevenson

If you have any questions or problems in your area, then just pick up the phone and contact your Housing Officer, at the office.



Fly The Flag OK?

We can't deny that "one man's meat is another man's poison" or that "we all have freedom of expression" are statements of truth.

However, how far should we go to share our views with other people around us? This is a real question for us all to consider.

Is flying a Saltire or Union Jack offensive? What about a swastika or a banner for One Direction?

We have recognised that maybe we need to have some guidance for tenants, staff and Committee regarding the public display of materials on our properties. Whilst we will

never condone permanent display materials attached to our properties without approval (this is a breach of our tenancy agreement) or displays of a blatantly offensive nature, what are we going to do about displays relating to next year's Commonwealth Games, Independence Referendum or similar events?

We will shortly be seeking to draw up a position statement on this subject so if you have any relevant views please feel free to email us on info@forthha.org or let us know your thoughts at our office. Provided they aren't offensive that is!

Cambusbarron Forth Tenants - Halloween Event

The Cambusbarron Tenants' Group are hosting a Halloween competition for the children of Auld School Wynd and Clayhills Drive. There will be a fancy dress and pumpkin competition. The winners will be selected by a guest judge. This will be held outside No 39 Clayhills Drive at 7pm on Thursday 31st October. To confirm if you can attend please let Lynda Simpson, Chairperson, know by e-mailing lynda.simpson23@yahoo.co.uk. The group are also happy to supply the pumpkin for the competition

so just let Lynda know in advance and she will arrange a pumpkin.

Forth Environment Link also attended the last meeting and will be looking at:

- Increasing community and household recycling rates
- Increase food waste caddy participation rates
- Reducing household food waste and in turn saving money
- Upcycling workshops – something new from old

In the first instance Kelly Rice from Forth Environment Link will be monitoring the bins.

The next meeting will be held on Monday 18th November at 6.30pm at Cambusbarron Community Centre. We hope that you will be able to attend and you will be made very welcome.

Tenants' Groups – Cornton and Cambusbarron

For details of Tenants' Groups log on to www.forthha.org.uk. Under Main Menu Tenants' Zone click on Participation.

This provides details of future meeting dates and minutes of previous minutes. If you have an agenda item for a future

meeting just phone Angela Laley at the office or e mail: angela@forthha.org.uk.

Estate Management Visit Dates

Our 2 Housing Officers cover the following areas:

Elaine Shepherd – Cambusbarron, Cornton, Dunblane, Raploch, Riverside, Stirling Town – Cowane Street, Myles House, Tannery Lane/ Queen Street.

Elaine will be carrying out an estate visit to your area week commencing: 11th November.

Caroline Stevenson – Bannockburn, Braehead, Cowie, Fallin, Plean, St. Ninians, Whins of Milton, Stirling Town - Baker Street/Morris Terrace, Barn Road, Crosbies Court, Victoria Place

Caroline will be carrying out an estate visit to your area week commencing: 4th November.



Landscaping

- Let Us Know What Improvements You Would Like

In the June issue of Speaking Forth we asked for feedback on how to mark our 25th anniversary. The feedback received indicated an overwhelming support for environmental improvements around Forth's homes.

It is now over to you. If you would like improvements, such as additional plants or trees, around your area then please email us at info@forthha.org.uk by 31 October 2013. We will then progress our plans and planting will be carried out next Spring.



Increased Development Funding

We are delighted to report that earlier this summer the Scottish Government agreed to increase the grant levels available for Associations to build new housing.

This decision went a long way to reversing the cuts introduced a few years ago and the result is that our on-going development programme will be more secure and will place existing tenants at less risk.

Our decision to keep developing over the past

few years, when grant rates have been much lower, has been vindicated as it means, unlike some other associations, we have maintained our expertise in this area and have an on-going programme of new developments.

Our recent developments have only been viable thanks to funding contributions from Stirling Council. We want to thank them for this support and we look forward to continued co-operation as we seek to meet the housing needs of our communities.



Office Closure due to Public Holidays

Please note that our offices will be closed for the following public holidays: Friday 27th September and Monday 30th September 2013.

If you have a genuine emergency repair over this period please contact:

Gas Central Heating -
0800 048 2710 (Saltire)

Gas Leaks – 0800 111999

Any Other Genuine
Emergency Repairs –
Please phone our office

Tel: 01786 446066 and
listen to the message on
the answering machine.

New tenants at Clement
Loan/Old Doune Road,
Dunblane should report
genuine emergency
repairs to Marshall
Construction
Tel:01259 219500.



Noise can cause disruption and distress to people at home, at leisure and at work. Surveys of noise complaints show that the most common problem is caused by neighbours – mainly loud music or TV, DIY, barking dogs, audible intruder alarms or laminate flooring.

Common causes of annoyance to neighbours and practical steps that can be taken to minimise it include:

Loud Music or TV

To avoid causing a nuisance:

- Keep the volume down.
- Place speakers away from partition walls, floors and ceilings.
- Consider wearing headphones, especially late at night.

Significant Performance Failure? – An Information Leaflet to Help

Our Governing Body, the Scottish Housing Regulator, has produced a new information leaflet. This provides clearer information on what a significant performance failure (SPF) is; what tenants should do if they are aware of a SPF and the difference between a SPF and a complaint.

When to report a significant performance failure:

A significant performance failure will occur when we fail to do something, or take action that puts our tenants'

interests at risk. A significant performance failure will relate to services provided to tenants. When a service failure affects only one tenant or a small number of tenants then this should be dealt with as a complaint.

For example, a significant performance failure could occur when we:

- fail to carry out health and safety requirements, such as annual gas safety checks;
- fail to allocate houses in line with our legal responsibilities or good practice;

- do not maintain tenants' homes or carry out repairs in line with our published responsibilities;
- fail to allow tenants to participate and influence the decisions that we make.

If you require further information on significant performance failures please contact:

Carolyn Anderson

Phone: 0141 305 4199

E-Mail: spf@scottishhousingregulator.gsi.gov.uk

Iain Stirling - Update

People may be aware that staff member Iain Stirling recently took unwell at work and was hospitalised as a result.

We'd like to thank people for their best wishes and enquiries about his wellbeing.

At the time of writing Iain is still off work but is at home recuperating. Any issue that would normally be directed to Iain should be directed to his colleagues Anne Matthew or Calum Carberry in Technical Services.

Feeling Low, Anxious Or Stressed?

Feeling low, stressed or anxious are common problems. Some people recover in a few weeks on their own, while others need more specialist help and support. That's where Living Life can help.

NHS Living Life is a free telephone service based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). Their self-help coaches and therapists can help you understand some of the reasons why you are feeling low, address negative patterns of thinking and can teach new ways of coping.

Living Life can be accessed either through a referral by your GP or by contacting the service directly by phoning: 0800 328 9655.

What Happens After Phoning The Service?

After contacting the service, a questionnaire is sent for completion and return. Arrangements are then made to call and discuss the type of support best suited to your needs. For further information about Living Life phone: 0800 328 9655.

Window Replacements

As part of our on-going work to maintain homes in tip top condition we are about to undertake window replacements at Bruce View and Tannery Lane.

Tenants at 18 to 23 Bruce View will have the windows to the rear of their homes replaced, due to the problems associated with exposure and high winds. At Tannery Lane the tenants at 11 to 21 (excluding flat 14) will have all their windows replaced.

We will be fitting UPVC windows in these homes, which will provide tenants with draft free highly insulated replacements to overcome the current draughts. A further advantage of these UPVC windows is that we won't be required to paint them in years to come.

Each tenant affected will get details of what is proposed in their home and also what co-operation we require in the way of access etc. Getting this work complete before the worst of the winter weather should further improve the comfort levels in these flats.

Performance Reporting

As you'll be aware we are now measuring our key performance in line with the Social Housing Charter and from next year will give tenants an annual report on the results.

Following discussions with our Tenants' View Forum it was agreed that we'd do an initial report this year, to give a flavour of what might come. As a result, our 2012/13 Annual Report, which is delivered to tenants with this newsletter, includes a summary of key performance statistics.

Alongside this we have a more detailed performance report which is available on our

web site (www.forthha.org.uk/Performance-Scrutiny.html). We'd encourage tenants to have a look at this or if you don't have internet access, contact our office and we'll send you a paper copy.

The report highlights how we view our 2012/13 performance and what changes we have introduced for the current year. The next Tenants' View Forum will discuss the report. If you have views why not join the meeting (see P15) or let us know your thoughts by contacting Angela Laley at our office (Tel:446066 or E-mail: angela@forthha.org.uk).

Tenant Participation Policy Sealed With Approval



Following extensive consultation with Tenants View Forum, E Group, Committee and staff, the revised Tenant Participation Policy has now been adopted. The main feedback was that it was easy to read and understand, and that it put tenants at the centre of our business. Thanks to everyone that was involved in the consultation process. Should you wish a copy of this policy please contact the office.

Pumpkin Soup



**What do you do with the flesh of your pumpkin?
Don't let it go to waste. Why not make some soup?**

Ingredients

- 4 tbsp olive oil
- 2 onions, finely chopped
- 1kg pumpkins or squash, peeled, deseeded and chopped into chunks
- 700ml vegetable stock or chicken stock
- 142ml pot double cream
- 4 slices wholemeal seeded bread
- handful pumpkin seeds from a packet

Method

1. Heat 2 tbsp olive oil in a large saucepan, then gently cook 2 finely chopped onions for 5 mins, until soft but not coloured. Add 1kg peeled, deseeded and chopped pumpkin or squash to the pan, then carry on cooking for 8-10 mins, stirring occasionally until it starts to soften and turn golden.
2. Pour 700ml vegetable stock into the pan, then season with salt and pepper. Bring to the boil, then simmer for 10 mins until the squash is very soft. Pour the 142ml pot of double cream into the pan, bring back to the boil, then purée with a hand blender. The soup can now be frozen for up to 2 months.
3. While the soup is cooking, slice the crusts from 4 slices of wholemeal seed bread, then cut the bread into small croutons. Heat the remaining 2 tbsp olive oil in a frying pan, then fry the bread until it starts to become crisp. Add a handful of pumpkin seeds to the pan, then cook for a few minutes more until they are toasted. These can be made a day ahead and stored in an airtight container. Reheat the soup if needed, taste for seasoning, then serve scattered with croutons and seeds and drizzled with more olive oil, if you want.

Tenant Satisfaction Update

The initial results of the recent tenant satisfaction have now been received and we are busy considering them.

Initial findings are that tenants continue to rate our service delivery very highly, with overall satisfaction ratings

being maintained at 94%.

We do however need to give the results a full analysis and people can expect a special edition of Speaking Forth to give a full report on the findings. This should be available in early November 2013.



Tenants' View Forum – Come Along and Have Your Say



The next meeting will take place on Wednesday 23rd October at 11am at our offices. Tea and refreshments will be provided. This Forum enables tenants to provide feedback on policies and performance. At this meeting the following will be discussed:

- Joint Tenant Satisfaction Survey - Results

- Close Cleaning and Landscape Maintenance Surveys - Results
- Performance Report 2012/13

We hope that you can make it. You will be made very welcome. John Cameron, Director and Angela Laley, Project & Communications Co-ordinator, will be hosting the meeting.

Annual Forth Good Neighbour Award – Win a £25 Supermarket Voucher!



We can all appreciate the benefits of having a good neighbour. As part of looking after our neighbours, we are holding our Annual Good Neighbour Award competition. If you would like to nominate your neighbour for going that extra mile please let us know. This could be for doing your shopping, nipping in for a cup of tea and a friendly chat, clearing your path of snow, making you feel welcome when you moved in, helping to tidy up your garden etc

The winner will receive a £25 voucher for a local supermarket of the winner's choice and will be featured in the Christmas

Newsletter. Last year Mr David Lenton, from Bruce Street won this award after being nominated by Mrs Hamill for "putting the bins out for all residents in block, clearing path when it snows and getting any shopping that is needed." etc

To nominate your neighbour, who requires to be a Forth tenant, just explain in no more than 100 words why they deserve Forth's Good Neighbour Award.

To enter please e mail or write to Angela Laley, 4th Floor, Wallace House, 17-21 Maxwell Place, Stirling, FK8 1JU prior to 18th October 2013.

E mail: angela@forthha.org.uk

Survey Winners!

Well done to Mr & Mrs MacGregor, Raploch for returning their Points of View Card questionnaire and to Mrs Heeps, Plean for returning her Fuel Switch Questionnaire. Both won £25 in supermarket vouchers.

The winners of the Joint Tenant Satisfaction Surveys will be featured in the Christmas Newsletter. We appreciate your feedback as this lets us improve our services.



Useful Contact Details...

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