

# Tenants News Summary

September 2012



Clackmannanshire  
Council

[www.clacksweb.org.uk](http://www.clacksweb.org.uk)

## Welcome to the Tenants' News Summary

The articles contained in this document detail our recent activity and performance results, these feature in this edition.

If you would like to comment on the style of the tenants news summary or suggest articles or information you would like to see in a future edition, please contact us at:

Tenant Participation

Tel: 01259 450000 (please hold and ask the customer service adviser for Housing Business Management Services)

Email: [housing@clacks.gov.uk](mailto:housing@clacks.gov.uk)



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## Homing In on the Housing Service

The Council is embarking on a very positive and exciting project to build new council housing in Clackmannanshire, however, there is much more we need to do to help provide housing to those in housing need. Areas we are currently working on to increase options for applicants and to make best use of current and future housing stock are:

- ▲ Developing an enhanced Housing Options Service
- ▲ Launched a Common Housing Register
- ▲ Reviewing our Housing Allocations Policy
- ▲ Developing a Tenancy Sustainability Strategy.



## Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan

Preparations are well underway to carry out a full review of the 30 year HRA Financial Business Plan. This is the financial framework that underpins the investment we make in our housing stock and how we fund the services we provide here in Housing Operations.

Central to the development of the HRA Financial Business Plan is finding out what the tenants want us to provide them with as a landlord. We will be carrying out lots of exercises with the tenants over the coming months to capture their thoughts.

The Housing Service Plan sets out key issues for the Service, our approach and the plan of how we will deliver on key business priorities over the year.

The aim of our Service is that every household in our area should have access to a good quality and affordable home, with advice and support services that meet their needs.

The key issues identified are as follows:

- ▲ maintain our record of continuous improvement through the Council's Growing in Excellence programme. This is done against the background of major change and the requirement to deliver efficiencies and good quality services providing value for money for our customers.
- ▲ The introduction of the new Scottish Housing Regulator and the Social Housing Charter require us to work in partnership with tenants and stakeholders to plan our business, set local standards and outcomes.
- ▲ Improving outcomes for those experiencing ASB and serious neighbour nuisance in line with the Community Safety Strategy.
- ▲ Improving sustainability of tenancies and communities through delivery of intensive housing management services
- ▲ The requirements of the Housing Scotland Act 2010 and the Property Factors Act;
- ▲ Delivery of the new Clackmannanshire Housing Strategy.
- ▲ A major review of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Financial Business Plan
- ▲ The need to review the Council's Allocations Policy to include measures to make best use of existing stock and address the impacts of Welfare Reform
- ▲ The requirements of the Housing Support Regulation.
- ▲ Focussing on Fuel Poverty and Carbon emissions to deliver on the Home Energy statutory requirements.



## Clackmannanshire Housing Strategy

Every year the Council have to put plans for new build houses together in the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) and submit it to the Government. On the basis of this document, the Government will then choose to allocate funding to landlords for new build houses, which can be for Council or Housing Association schemes.

This year's SHIP will cover the 3 financial years from 2012 to 2015 and shows how identified housing needs and priorities will be tackled and how affordable housing can be delivered within limited funding budgets.

The SHIP features the completion of 34 houses in Sauchie by Ochil View Housing Association, with other houses planned for Greygoran and Todds Yard.

In 2013 the Bowmar area features as a priority, where the long standing Elm Grove site is capable of accommodating up to 42 units. This site is owned by Ochil View.

The Council is also looking to the possibility of developing smaller special needs accommodation and a number of small sites are being provisionally considered for future social housing.



## Affordable Housing

Two new build Council housing developments are currently on site in Dalmore Drive and the Orchard in Tullibody. These will be the first new build Council properties in Clackmannanshire for over twenty years, so very exciting for the Housing Service and positive for applicants on the waiting lists.

The Council's allocations team is in the process of matching applicants to these new properties which are estimated to be complete by December 2012. As members of the Tayside, Fife and Central Housing Options Hub we will develop and implement a full Housing Options service.

## Housing Allocations

Earlier this year the Scottish Government consulted on social housing landlords having more flexibility on the allocation of social housing, the types of tenancies that are available and proposed changes to tackling Anti-social behaviour.

In February 2012 the Scottish Government launched its consultation to look at how a greater level of flexibility can be provided to social landlords through proposals for changes such as:



- ▲ Allowing landlords to take ASB into account when deciding priority
- ▲ The power to exclude tenants from a certain area if they have been evicted for ASB
- ▲ The introduction of probationary tenancies for all new tenants
- ▲ The ability to take income / age / property ownership into account when allocating tenancies

Clackmannanshire Council completed a response to the Government consultation on the proposed changes.

## Common Housing Register (CHR)

The Clackmannanshire Common Housing Register was launched on Monday 16th April in partnership with Ochil View Housing Association and Paragon Housing Association.

This exciting development was the result of the commitment from the 3 partners in developing and implementing a solution that put customers first. A key feature of the CHR is an improvement to customer service with outcomes likely to deliver efficiencies in terms of cost and staff time.

As a result of the CHR, allocation staff are now spending more quality time with applicants and are able to give them more information on their prospects and options in terms of meeting their housing requirements.

## Customer Service Excellence (CSE)

Following our achievement of attaining the CSE award in August 2011, all of Community and Regulatory Services will be working together to obtain the award for the full Service. This year, the whole of the Service will be aiming to achieve CSE to maintain our award and to build on the good work carried out last year.

A CSE ideas board has been set up, with new standards for the collection of evidence updated for this year's CSE inspection, which is going well.



## Housing Performance

The Housing Service is committed to providing best value for tenants and the wider community. We want to share with our customers and partners how well we are doing in meeting our key performance measures and standards.

Our performance results for the year 2011 show how the Council compares with other Local Authorities and the benchmarking indicators of the Scottish Housing Best Value Network (SHBVN).

Some of the findings from the benchmarking report were:

- ▲ We have higher than SHBVN average satisfaction for our Void standard
- ▲ Our void rent loss is still below the Scottish average
- ▲ Arrears net debit % is better than the SHBVN average

The overview of our performance shows continuing improvement in most key areas and listed opposite is an example of how our void performance has consistently remained within the four week average turnaround.



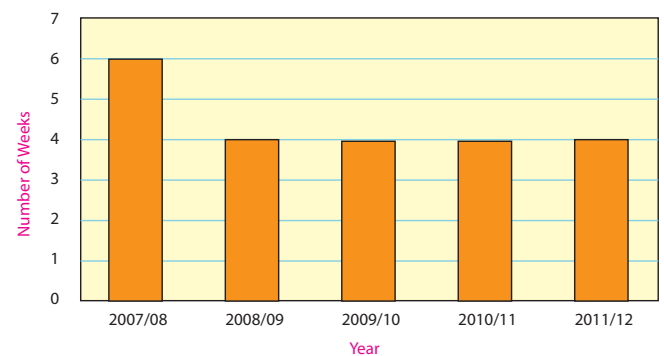
## Void Turnaround Time Performance 2008 - 2012

The graph shows how we have improved and maintained our performance on the management of empty properties through the management of the waiting list and the allocation of properties over the past few years.

At the end of the first quarter of 2012/13, we are continuing to let non low demand properties within our target time scale of 4 weeks.

Further details of our Housing performance can be found on clacksweb.

### Void turnaround performance for non low demand properties



## Housing Support Regulations

The way that we assess and deliver housing support services is currently out for consultation by the Scottish Government, but it is expected that there will be a further period of consultation later in the year based on the feedback from this first round.

Section 158 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010, introduces a statutory duty to assess and provide housing support needs of persons who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. This duty also covers any members of the household who may require housing support services.

This legislation and the ensuing regulations are likely to have a major impact on resources and how we deliver housing support services to people in the future.

Further information can be found at [www.scotland.gov.uk/Consultations/Current](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Consultations/Current).

## Celebrating Success Event

Friday (27th April) was the day set aside to share in a celebration of good work, successes and achievements within the Housing Service. The celebrating success event is an opportunity to highlight good things that colleagues have achieved. It was decided to mark the occasion this year with a special Olympic theme.

The celebrating success event is an opportunity to highlight good things that colleagues have achieved. In the run up to the day, all staff were encouraged to nominate individuals or teams within the service for five special categories.

- ▲ Overcoming Hurdles
- ▲ Team Work Relay
- ▲ Aiming High Jump
- ▲ Olympic Spirit
- ▲ Extra Mile Marathon

At the ceremony in Lime Tree House, Director of Services to Communities, Garry Dallas complimented the housing department on their hard work.



Garry said: "I don't underestimate everything that has been done and the hard work that was put in to bring it all together. It has been a real team effort."

Head of Community and Regulatory Services, John Gillespie, made the presentations of the gold, silver and bronze medals to the winners, who, in Olympic tradition, had a specially made podium to receive their accolades.

The celebratory event produced many examples of great work and achievements by housing staff and the celebrations included a raffle with many great prizes donated by staff. As part of the celebrations housing staff also raised money for Forth Valley Disability Sport.

## Welfare Reform

The Impact of Welfare Reform is currently a major topic for tenants and social landlords. Some of the main points that may have an impact are listed below.

- ▲ Benefit cap of average £26k
- ▲ Under-occupancy charges e.g. if a single tenant on benefits has 1 spare bedroom, will have 14 % penalty or 25 % for 2 spare rooms. This does not include pensioners or if the spare room is for a carer. It is claimed that 95,000 people have an extra room in the UK.
- ▲ Applicants can only claim on-line as it will be automatic and remotely processed and a password will be provided
- ▲ Benefits will be paid monthly in arrears direct to claimants

Housing staff attended the first meeting of the Council Welfare Reform Working Group. The group will assess and monitor the impact of the Welfare Reform, consider the implications for the Council and build an action plan to mitigate against the effects of the changes.

## Changes to the complaints procedure

### What happens when I have complained?

- ▲ We will always tell you who is dealing with your complaint.
- ▲ Our complaints procedure now has two stages instead of three stages:

### Stage one – frontline resolution

We aim to resolve complaints quickly and close to where we provided the service. This could mean an on-the-spot apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong, and immediate action to resolve the problem.

We will give you our decision at Stage 1 in five working days or less, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

If we can't resolve your complaint at this stage, we will explain why and tell you what you can do next. We might suggest that you take your complaint to Stage 2. You may choose to do this immediately or sometime after you get our initial decision.

## Stage two – investigation

Stage 2 deals with two types of complaint: those that have not been resolved at Stage 1 and those that are complex and require detailed investigation.

When using Stage 2 we will:

- ▲ acknowledge receipt of your complaint within three working days
- ▲ discuss your complaint with you to understand why you remain dissatisfied and what outcome you are looking for
- ▲ give you a full response to the complaint as soon as possible and within 20 working days.

If our investigation will take longer than 20 working days, we will tell you. We will agree revised time limits with you and keep you updated on progress.

### What if I'm still dissatisfied?

After we have fully investigated, if you are still dissatisfied with our decision or the way we dealt with your complaint, you can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to look at it.

The SPSO cannot normally look at:

- ▲ a complaint that has not completed our complaints procedure (so please make sure it has done so before contacting the SPSO)
- ▲ events that happened, or that you became aware of, more than a year ago
- ▲ a matter that has been or is being considered in court.

You can contact the SPSO:

In Person: SPSO 4 Melville Street Edinburgh EH3 7NS	By Post: SPSO Freepost EH641 Edinburgh EH3 0BR
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Freephone: 0800 377 7330

Online contact [www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us](http://www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us)

Website: [www.spsso.org.uk](http://www.spsso.org.uk)

Mobile site: <http://m.spsso.org.uk>

## Garden Maintenance & Estate Management

### Spotlight on - Garden Maintenance

The vast majority of gardens are maintained to a reasonable standard but year after year there are certain individuals who do not tend to their garden and in so doing breach their tenancy agreement.

Feedback has highlighted that a couple of overgrown gardens can impact negatively on how a street looks and as such it is something we are keen to avoid. We have a garden aid scheme for tenants who are elderly or for reason of disability cannot maintain their garden.

However, the Tenancy Management Team is determined to ensure that gardens are maintained to a reasonable standard. To this end we will be ensuring a close focus on tenants whose gardens are below standard.

This will be done by regular visits to ensure the condition is monitored. In the past this type of intensive management has proven to yield results with the numbers of overgrown gardens reducing, we hope to have similar results this year.

Further information on our Garden Aid scheme can be found by clicking on [Garden Aid Information](#) or by telephoning 0845 055 7070 and asking for Housing Management Development Team.

### Estate Walkabouts

The Estate walkabouts for 2012 are now underway, with 9 already completed.

The main purpose of the estate walkabouts is to provide the opportunity for staff to liaise with tenants, tenants groups and elected members in each area. All our estates are checked regularly as a matter of course with estate walkabouts supplementing this work and allowing stakeholders to share in the process.

The feedback we have received so far has been encouraging, and we are keen to have as many people as possible participate so we can make sure that we are delivering high value services to our tenants.

The full schedule of walkabouts is published in the Events Diary or can be found by clicking on [Estate Walkabout Diary](#)

If you're interested in attending the walkabout for your area, please contact the Tenancy Management Team, Tel: 0845 055 7070 and we'll be happy to provide you with more information.

## Scottish Social Housing Charter

After extensive consultation with tenants and customers throughout Scotland, The Scottish Government has introduced a new Social Housing Charter that sets out the standards and outcomes that social landlords such as Clackmannanshire Council should aim to achieve when delivering services.

The Charter replaces the performance standards detailed in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. It does not replace any of the legal duties that apply to Clackmannanshire Council, but in a number of cases, the outcomes describe the results that the Council should achieve in meeting our legal duties.

The purpose of the Charter is to help to improve the quality and value of services that social landlords provide for their tenants and other customers.

It will do this by:

- ▲ Providing tenants and other customers with a clear statement of what they can expect from the Housing service.
- ▲ Focussing the Social Landlords efforts on achieving the outcomes that matter most to our tenants and customers.
- ▲ Forming the basis of the way Housing Services will be regulated by the new independent Scottish Housing Regulator.

The Scottish Housing Regulator's reports will also help ensure that public investment in new social housing only goes to landlords that are assessed to be performing well.

There will be opportunities for our tenants and customers to help us self assess the services we deliver to make sure we meet these standards and outcomes set out in The Charter.

Further information can be found on the Tenant Participation page or by clicking on Tenant Participation

## Spotlight on our Community Activities

### Gaberston Residents Association - Alloa

Gaberston Residents is a local tenants & residents group who look after the interests of their area, whilst working with the Council's Housing Service to improve their neighbourhood. But it doesn't stop there as they also like to get involved in social activities that bring the community closer together like family fun days, bingo teas and car boot sales, having fun whilst raising funds for the group.

They have already used some of the monies from their fundraising efforts by organising trips for the community to the Royal yacht Britannia and a sail on loch Katrine followed by a high tea at the Braehead golf club. These trips have proved very popular with the community.

### Celebrations at Sauchie Community Group

A big congratulations to the Sauchie Community group who recently celebrated their 20 year anniversary as a community group by holding a celebration dinner for its members and their friends at the Schawpark golf club in Sauchie.

The dinner highlighted a lot of the good work done throughout the years within the community. This was then followed by a disco with DJ Keith Turner the group President

keeping everyone entertained. The evening proved such a great success, with those attending hoping that this could become an annual event for the group.

### Charitable Colleagues help local groups

A Housing colleague Glynis Watters and friends have kindly donated the proceeds from their annual Christmas party night held in the Alloa town hall to help some local groups within Clackmannanshire.

Sauchie Community Group have been given a cheque for £150.00 to help them towards buying camping equipment. This is to enable them to take some Sauchie youngsters away on camping weekends' throughout the summer holidays.

The second group to benefit from their generosity is the Delph Pond Forum.

They have kindly donated a £180.00 to buy some bulbs and equipment, to help get the local community and local schools involved in a biodiversity woodland planting event to be held in October 2012 at the Delph pond.

And finally a donation of £50.00 has been given to the Tullibody history group to help them cover their annual running costs.