

Cladding used in Council housing

Following the recent fire at Grenfell Tower in London, both the UK and Scottish Governments have directed all social housing providers to carry out fire safety audits to any domestic buildings that are above 18m from ground level – that is 6 storeys and above, and/or where such buildings have been retro-fitted with rain-screen cladding.

In Moray, we have no domestic properties above 18m. The type of rain-screen cladding that was fitted at Grenfell Tower is not a product that we have used in any of our domestic properties.

If any tenant is concerned about fire safety in their home, they should contact us on **0300 1234 566** or email housing@moray.gov.uk to discuss their concerns.

You can also get free advice from Fire Scotland at www.firescotland.gov.uk



Have you changed your phone number? 

Do you have a new email address? 

If so, please let us know so that we can update your details.

Contact us on housing@moray.gov.uk or phone 0300 1234 566.

Contents...

PAGE	
3.	Councillor welcome
4.	Gas safety
5.	Carbon monoxide poisoning
6.	Smoke alarm safety
7.	Customer service
8.	REAP Scotland
9.	Changes in the East Housing Team
10.	Paying your rent
11.	myaccount
12.	Summer safety
13.	Garden tips
14.	House Exchange
15.	Downsizing incentive scheme
16.	Housing functional assessments
17.	Neighbour nuisance
18.	Housing investment strategy
19.	Estate improvement budget consultation
20.	Scottish social housing charter
21.	My Moray Community Council elections
22.	Get involved Improve your Tenants Voice newsletter
23.	Moray Tenants Partnership
24.	Your feedback
25.	Summer wordsearch

CONTACT US

If you need to contact us or need information please call our **Contact Centre on 0300 1234 566** or visit our website

www.moray.gov.uk

Alternatively you can visit one of our access points.

BUCKIE

Buckie Access Point,
13 Cluny Square, Buckie, AB56 1AJ.

ELGIN

Elgin Access Point,
Council Office, High Street, Elgin,
IV30 1BX.

FORRES

Forres Access Point, Auchernack,
High Street, Forres,
IV36 1DX.

KEITH

Keith Community Hub, Mid Street,
Keith, AB55 5AH



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Dear readers,



Welcome to the Summer edition of the Tenants' Voice.

After the local government elections in May, I was appointed to the Chair of Communities Committee. I have been a member before and so know a little of the background to the areas of responsibility.

My recent work has focussed on the integration of health and social care in my role as Co-Chair with NHS Grampian. I have a keen interest in ensuring housing allocations are made that best suit individual circumstances with regards to access and adaptations.

I am aware that the housing waiting list is growing as demand increases, and it is pleasing to see new housing developments in Forres and Elgin come to fruition. These developments will enable independent living and also offer extra care where this is needed.

We have made some changes to our downsizing incentive scheme which now gives tenants with adapted properties the opportunity to move if they do not require the adaptations. You can find out more about the scheme in our downsizing article.

A diverse range of affordable housing is required to accommodate households of all sizes, including adapted homes. New Government money means we can progress our new build programme working in partnership with developers and housing associations.

Your feedback is always welcome and we continue to seek the involvement of tenants on any aspect of our housing services. The Moray Tenant Forum is an active voice for all tenants and I would encourage you to get involved. I would also encourage you to join our service improvement panel.

Finally, I look forward to meeting you or hearing from you should you wish to raise any points during my term as Chair and I can be contacted by e-mail on lorna.creswell@moray.gov.uk or via the Members Support Office.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lorna Creswell".

Councillor Lorna Creswell
Chair of Communities Committee

Gas Safety



By law, we must make sure that all gas appliances and flues in your home are checked and certified as being “safe” every year.

To meet this legal requirement we must access all properties with gas appliances to carry out a service and safety check every year.

We need your help to keep your home safe! There is a real risk of a gas explosion if gas is left unchecked and un-serviced. There is also a risk of CO2 poisoning.

Our gas engineers need you to give them access to your home to allow this important safety check to be carried out. Most tenants provide access and our gas engineers can carry out the annual safety check within the required time.

Each year a small numbers of tenants do not allow our engineers access to undertake the checks.

If you do not allow us entry we will break in. If we do break in, we will change the locks and this cost will be charged to you.

Please avoid this unnecessary expense and risk by allowing the gas engineer into your home. If you are not going to be at home when the engineer is scheduled to call please let us know, and we can make an appointment for a time that suits you. You can phone us on **0300 1234 566** to make alternative arrangements for access. It is important that you tell us your most recent contact details and phone numbers so we can get in touch with you if we need to.

We will need gas and electricity to service your central

heating. If you have prepayment gas or electricity meters, please make sure there is credit in them when we call. If you have no gas or electricity we will not be able to carry out the service and we will have to turn your gas supply off for your own safety.

It is a breach of your tenancy agreement not to allow access to your home for gas servicing. If any serious fault occurs in the gas heating system in your home, your safety and that of your neighbours could be affected.

Don't put your home and yourself at risk!



Carbon Monoxide Poisoning



Carbon monoxide is a poisonous colourless gas. It has no smell or taste but it is very dangerous and exposure to it can cause brain damage or even death.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include drowsiness, dizziness and feeling weak, headaches, nausea, and stomach or chest pain. It feels similar to having the flu or food poisoning but does not cause a high temperature.

If you experience these symptoms while you are using a gas appliance, stop using the appliance until it has been checked by one of our engineers, and consult with a doctor immediately. Carbon monoxide poisoning can affect how your brain works so you may not think anything is wrong.

What can cause carbon monoxide to build up?

- gas appliances can become faulty because they have not been checked and repaired or replaced
- flues can be blocked or not working properly
- not enough air is getting in to your home to keep the gas burning properly in the appliance

How to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning

We fit a carbon monoxide alarm at every gas appliance in your home. These alarms are battery operated and we replace the alarm every six years. The alarm will detect if any carbon monoxide is present and if it is, the alarm will beep continuously.

An alarm is not a substitute for regular gas servicing however, so it is very important that you make sure you allow access to our gas engineers when they come to carry out your annual gas service.

If you hear a continuous beep from your carbon monoxide alarm you should phone the **gas emergency** number at once on **0800 111 999**. Where possible you should also:

- turn off the gas at the meter
- open windows and doors to let the gas out
- put out any naked flames
- avoid turning electrical switches or sockets on or off



Smoke Alarm Safety

Every year, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service deal with approximately **827** fires in the home. **122** of these result in injury or death.

Smoke alarms can save lives!

Smoke alarms play an important role in reducing fire deaths and injuries. If there is a fire in your home, smoke can spread fast, and smoke alarms give you time to get to safety.

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service can give you a free home fire safety check. They will visit you and look at all the areas of fire risk within your home. They will fit smoke alarms for free where they are needed and give you advice about maintenance.

To arrange your free home fire safety visit contact the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service:

- Call **0800 0731 999**
- Text "**FIRE**" to **80800** from your mobile phone
- Complete an online form on the Scottish Fire and Rescue website <http://bit.ly/2qQHobJ>

Smoke alarm tips

- A smoke alarm should be fitted on each level of your home and these should be linked up to each other – we will fit smoke alarms for all tenants.
- The best place to fit a smoke alarm is on the ceiling.
- Alarms should be 12 inches (30 cm) away from any walls, lights, doors, heating or air-conditioning vents.
- Alarms should not be fitted too close to the kitchen door – steam and cooking fumes are common causes of false alarms.
- Never take the batteries out – even for a short time.
- Never paint over smoke alarms or put stickers on them.
- Keep alarms clean and dust free. If you are decorating, use an elastic band to secure a plastic bag over the smoke alarm casing. Remove it when you are finished.
- Test your smoke alarms weekly by pressing the 'test' button. Make sure you can hear them loud and clear from every room in the house, even with the doors closed. If you can't hear them they need to be moved so contact us on **0300 1234 566** or at housing@moray.gov.uk.

Do you have additional support needs?

There are special alarms for older people and people with disabilities or special needs. There are mains-powered smoke alarms with back-up batteries, and also vibrating pads and flashing lights for those who are hearing impaired.



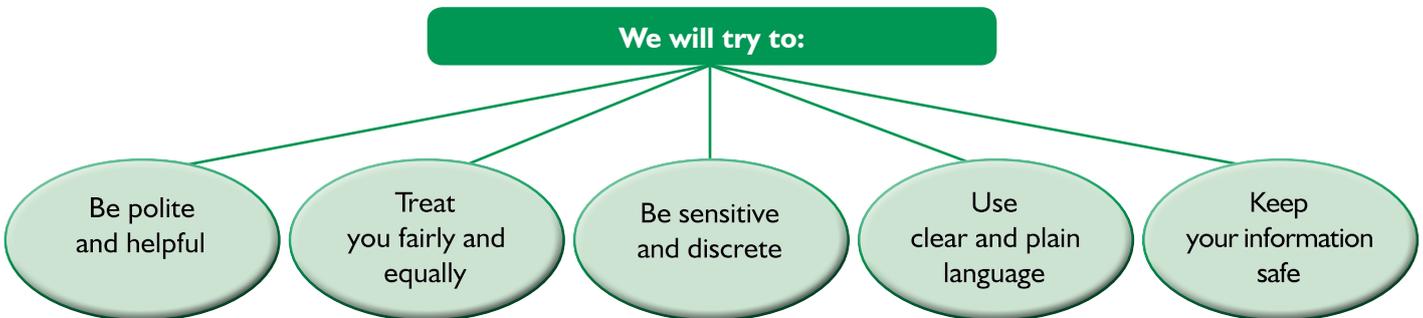
SCOTTISH
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Working together for a safer Scotland

Customer Service



All of our customers are important to us and we aim to provide a high quality of customer service.



Mutual Respect

In recent years our Staff has worked hard to improve the housing services that you receive. We don't always get things right and where errors occur, we will seek to correct them and apologise to you for any inconvenience that this has caused. Council officers live in your communities and as such they are no different to you.

Our customer service framework (see above) sets out how our officers will seek to meet your customer expectations. This framework also relies on you as we often need your support to deliver your housing services.

Every tenant has their own tenancy agreement. This agreement sets out the rights and responsibilities of both the Council and you (our tenant).

In recent years, housing staff has seen a gradual increase in the level of abusive and unacceptable behaviour from a very small minority of tenants. Officers and Tradesmen are now required to report all incidents of inappropriate and abusive behaviour and these are now recorded and kept on file. The Council has a zero tolerance policy towards such behaviour and we will reports incidents to the Police. In severe cases, it can also result in the loss of your tenancy.

We want to work with you in a positive manner and have you at the heart of our services and our decision making processes. We therefore ask that when you contact us or we visit you that we discuss things showing mutual respect.

If you are unhappy about the way some of your housing services are provided, you can always work with us through our tenants group and become involved in delivering change where this is possible. If you would like to become involved you can do so by phoning **0300 1234 566** or by emailing tenantparticipation@moray.gov.uk



connecting folk, work and place



SCOTLAND

REAP (Rural Environmental Action Project) is a local sustainable development charity based in Keith. REAP works to raise environmental awareness, tackle economic inequality and engage in social enterprise through various projects and services.

Current work includes:

- Local food and growing projects – ‘Grow Elgin’ is a project working with community groups, schools and individuals. Its aim is to increase the number of people growing and eating local fruit and veg and composting their own food waste. Workshops are also run to teach new skills such as sowing, planting, harvesting, preserving and composting.
- Energy saving projects – ‘Energy Benefits Moray’ is a project offering free and impartial energy saving advice and support to people of all ages in Moray.
- Wind farm community funds – REAP administer two local community benefit funds for local wind farms at Hill of Towie and Edintore.

We can also carry out community consultation and evaluation work.

For further information and to see what we can do:

Visit our website: www.reapscotland.org.uk

Visit our local office: 177 Mid Street, Keith

*Open Monday, Tuesday & Thursday
9:30am to 12.30pm and 1.00pm to
5.00pm*

*Open Wednesday 9.30am to
5.00pm*

Call us on: 01542 888070

Email: info@reapscotland.org.uk



Changes in the East area housing team

From 1 July 2017, Laura Sinclair will be taking over as full time area housing officer for the Buckie Coastal area.

The Buckie Coastal area covers:

Arradoul, Connage, Cullen, Deskford, Drybridge, Findochty, Fochabers, Lintmill, Portessie, Portknockie and Rathven.

Previously covering the position on a job share basis since October 2015, Laura advised that;

“I am looking forward to the challenge of having full control of the patch and coming back to work as a full time member of staff within the Moray East housing team.”



From 1 June 2017, Daniel Murray became the full time area housing officer for the Buckie Central area.

Previously covering the position on a job share basis since October 2015, Daniel stated;

“After being a job share within both the East and West housing teams I am looking forward to being able to now dedicate my time to one area, and being a full time member of staff within the Moray East housing team.”

Paying your rent

We know that it can be difficult to juggle finances but it is vital that your rent is paid on time. Paying your rent is a priority as rent arrears could mean you are putting your home at risk. Paying rent for your council property is a legal requirement which you agreed to when you signed your tenancy agreement.



We need your rent payments to allow us to fund housing services such as repairs and improvements to your home, upgrades of our housing stock and to fund new build housing projects. The rent you pay benefits all council tenants and we need your support to keep rent arrears to a minimum.

How to pay

You can check your rent balance and make payments at any time using our online rent balance tool. First you will need to sign up to the myaccount service at www.moray.gov.uk/myaccount. This service is simple, secure and is available 24/7. All you need is an email address to register and enjoy all the benefits of the myaccount service.

There are other ways you can pay your rent:

- By credit or debit card using the safe online payment system on our website
- At the Post Office or at any PayPoint outlet using your council house rent plastic payment card – remember to keep all your receipts and please make sure you are using your new payment card which looks like this



164 tenants tried to pay their rent on the old style payment card in May – please use the new purple cards to make sure your payment gets processed.

- By Standing Order
- By Direct Debit
- By phoning us on **0300 1234 566** in working hours and making payment over the phone.
- By Housing Benefit – if you receive housing benefit this will pay some or all of your rent. You must pay any outstanding rent not covered by housing benefit

You will find more information about how to pay your rent with links to relevant forms on our website at <http://bit.ly/2vweCiN>

How we can help

If you are struggling to pay your rent please get in touch with us.

We can help you:

- by meeting with you to discuss your circumstances and identify any issues.
- by making sure you are receiving your full entitlement to housing benefit or by helping you fill in housing benefit forms. We can also give you advice and information on universal credit payments.
- set up an affordable repayment agreement and together we can come up with a realistic plan to help you to repay any arrears and keep your rent payments regular and up to date.
- calculate how much money you have coming in and what your outgoings are. If necessary, we can refer you to our money advice service for more intensive help.



It is very important that you get in touch with us if you are having any difficulties paying your rent. Talking to us and maintaining regular contact is essential as it means we can help you to get through a difficult financial period.



If you do not pay your rent and you do not work with us to address any difficulties, then further actions will be taken. This could result in payments being taken from your benefits, your wages or bank account being arrested, and in the worst case you could be at risk of eviction from your home.

We want to prevent you from getting into arrears so please contact us and let us help. Phone **0300 1234 566** and ask for your area housing officer or email housing@moray.gov.uk. You can ask to speak to your housing officer at any time or ask them to visit you.

You can find more information about money advice with links to other agencies that can help you on our website at <http://bit.ly/2vwe0tv>.

You will also find information about Universal Credit on our website at <http://bit.ly/2v1N3uN>.

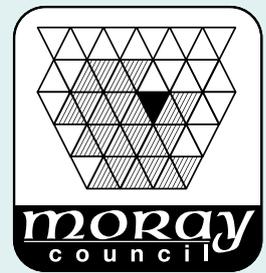
myaccount – available now

myaccount is your online customer account portal giving you the flexibility to manage your council accounts and services wherever and whenever it suits you. But, that's not the only advantage.

myaccount:

- is secure – access and use council service with confidence;
- is quick and easy contact – no need to call or visit us;
- is available 24/7;
- automatically populates forms with personal details;
- saves forms to complete later;
- can view all your online requests, transactions and contacts in one place;
- avoids re-registration if moving elsewhere in Scotland.

Each month we'll add new services. Keep up to date on what services are available at: www.moray.gov.uk/myaccount



mygovscot
myaccount



Have you matched your housing account to myaccount?

If you have tried to view your housing account recently, you'll be familiar with **myaccount**. All housing accounts must now be linked to **myaccount** to view personal information online. But, don't let this put you off, linking your account is really simple and, once your accounts are linked, you only need your email address and password to log in. You can check your points and position, rent balance and other council accounts and requests, all in one place.

Link up, enjoy the benefits and make life easier.

www.moray.gov.uk/myaccount

SUMMER

Whether you are staying at home this summer or jetting off to foreign climes, we want you to have a safe and enjoyable time. There are some simple safety tips that can help protect you and your family so that you can enjoy a fun filled summer:

In the home

- Make sure you keep your doors locked at all times – even when you are at home.
- If you are going away leave a spare key with a trusted friend or neighbour so they can check on your property while you are away.
- Keep your home in good order. Make sure that any rubbish is put in the bins outside and keep all doors, passageways and stairs free from any obstruction.
- Check the batteries on all smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors to make sure they are in working order.
- Keep all medicines and cleaning products away from children and pets.



Out and about

- Get rid of any glass or bottles by putting them in a bin and not leaving them out in the open.
- Make sure you extinguish and dispose of any smoking materials properly. Never throw a lit cigar or cigarette away in a rural area as this may cause serious fires, or even wildfires.
- If a fire does occur in the countryside, no matter how small, call the Fire Service straight away by dialing **999**. Even small fires can turn into a wildfire very quickly.
- Tents are particularly easy to catch fire – don't light fires close to your tent, cook well away from them, and make sure any campfires are out before you go to sleep.



- Wear appropriate clothing and safety gear during outdoor activities like bike riding and hiking.

Holidays abroad

- Sunny days in foreign countries can be very hot. Always use a sunscreen with an SPF of 30+ and reapply regularly to avoid painful sunburn.
- Drink plenty of water and try not to have too many sugary, caffeinated and alcoholic drinks. This will prevent dehydration.
- Never leave children unattended around a swimming pool and make sure they stay away from pool drains, pipes and openings. Don't swim if the pool has flat, broken or missing drain covers – drains can suction hair and body parts causing serious injury.
- Take care on the beach to only swim or surf in areas that are patrolled by lifeguards. If you get into trouble in the sea, stay calm, signal for help, float, and wait for help to arrive.
- Always wear a lifejacket during activities on the water such as boating or kayaking.
- Do not mention that you are away from home on social media sites as this can alert people to the fact that your home will be empty.
- Always read the safety advice for the country you are visiting. Your travel documents will usually have safety information within the small print. You can also find more detailed foreign travel advice on the FCO website at www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice.



Top tips for looking after your garden this summer

Summer is the time for relaxing in your garden enjoying the warm weather. It is a time for having friends and family round for barbecues and lazy days, and for children to play outdoors in the sun.

It is also the time for you to get out into your garden and make sure it is in tip top condition for the months ahead. Make sure your garden is in good shape this summer by following our top tips for a glorious garden:

- Mowing – Ideally you should cut your grass at least once a week during the summer months. Mowing little and often is better than letting it grow for a few weeks.
- Watering – Keep your garden well-watered by giving it a good soaking at least once or twice a week. If you have hanging baskets these will also need watered daily.
- Pests – Warm weather will bring out the usual garden pests. Greenfly love summer weather and these are very damaging for your plants. Get rid of greenfly by using a recommended product from your local garden centre.
- If you grow your own fruit and vegetables, make sure you keep an eye on it in the summer months. Water regularly and pick the produce when it is ready. Greenhouses can get very hot in warm weather so keep any vegetables in the shade on very hot days.
- Remember to feed your feathered friends. If the ground gets hard due to hot weather the birds will find it difficult to find food so help them out by supplying some bird feed. Attracting birds to your garden will also keep insects and pests down.



Grass cutting scheme

If you find it a struggle to keep your garden tidy, we offer a grass cutting scheme for a small charge. You can apply for the scheme if you are a tenant and you are:

- Aged 65 or over, with no other adults in the household who are physically able to cut the grass for you
- Under 65 and in receipt of a physical or mental-health related benefit such as Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance or Severe Disablement Allowance
- Registered blind
- Any age, but due to your 'vulnerability' would not be able to cut your grass. We may ask for evidence in such cases.

If you receive housing benefit and you qualify for the grass cutting service, we will provide the service free of charge. If you do not receive housing benefit you will have to pay for the grass cutting service. The cost is **£50.26** for the growing season which is April to October. If you join the scheme once the growing season has started, you will only pay a proportion of the cost depending on how many times you have your grass cut.

During the growing season you will have your grass cut 15 times. This service is for grass cutting only and does not include grass lifting or any other gardening work.

You can apply to join the grass cutting scheme by filling in the form on our website at www.moray.gov.uk/downloads/file106304.pdf

You can also phone us on **0300 1234 566** or email housing@moray.gov.uk.





The House Exchange website matches social housing tenants who want to swap their homes and covers the whole of the UK. It is simple to use and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

You can register for free through an online portal which is easy to use and you can then browse the site to find your perfect house match. If you do not have internet access at home, we can help you register. Call us on **0300 1234 566** or email housing@moray.gov.uk

House Exchange will invite you to identify what you are looking for, and the website will then use this information to suggest possible direct matches as well as chain matches. The website will also give you details of potential matches as they are created.

You can also get advice on a range of topics including:

- Mutual exchange
- Housing options
- Changes to welfare benefits
- Money advice
- Energy savings advice
- Employment

The House Exchange website can be found at www.houseexchange.org.uk.



Downsizing Incentive Scheme

Do you have extra rooms you don't need?

Do you have any disabled adaptations that no-one in your household needs?

You may be interested in our incentive scheme. This is a voluntary scheme that offers practical support and financial assistance to help you to move to a smaller or more suitable Council home if you want to. There is no pressure to move if you don't want to.

To be eligible for the scheme you must:

- ✓ be a Council tenant living in a three bedroom or larger property, which is now too big for your needs
- or
- ✓ be a Council tenant or qualifying occupier who lives in an adapted property and you no longer need the adapted or specialist feature of the house
- and
- ✓ have a satisfactory tenancy report that shows that:
 - ✓ your home meets our standards;
 - ✓ we are not taking antisocial behaviour action against you; and
 - ✓ you do not have unmanageable housing related debt;
- and
- ✓ your current home is a Council property and is in an area of demand and we can easily relet it.



What's in it for you?

We will always try and give you practical help. However, funding for this scheme is limited.

If you qualify for the scheme and there is funding left you will get a basic payment of **£1500**. In addition we will also give you a disruption payment of **£400** and **£400** for each bedroom that you give up. We will deduct any costs for recharges and arrears from the grant awarded. For example, if you move from a 4 bedroom property to a 2 bedroom property you will be entitled to:

Basic payment	£1,500
Plus disruption allowance	£400
Plus (£400 per bedroom given up)	£800
Total awarded	£2,700

Depending on your circumstances and needs, we can help you with the following:

- giving you information and advice about the downsizing scheme
- filling in forms
- viewings and removal arrangements
- arranging to disconnect or reconnect utilities
- notifying agencies of your change of address, GP, Bank
- helping you to arrange and dispose of unwanted furniture
- giving you information about housing benefit/universal credit, money advice and making the most of your income

More information

You can find out more about the scheme, including how to apply:

- on our website at www.moray.gov.uk/housing
- by phoning us on **0300 1234 566**
- by emailing us at housing@moray.gov.uk



Housing Functional Assessments

We have changed the way that we assess and award additional points to housing applicants who think their current home is not suitable because of their clinical health condition and/or disability.



If you apply for housing because you think that your home is not suitable because of a health condition and/or a disability, we will carry out a housing functional assessment. This is not an assessment of a person's condition or disability. It is a more holistic approach, taking into account mental health, physical and learning disability issues. It focuses on the way a condition affects how the person manages at home and their ability, or inability to carry out essential day to day tasks within their home.

The assessment will decide if more suitable accommodation would:

- Help stabilise a clinical condition or disability; or
- Allow a person to function more independently.

We have a dedicated housing occupational therapist who will carry out the assessment by reviewing the information an applicant has given in the new functional assessment form. We will write and tell you the outcome of the assessment within four weeks of receiving your form.

The criteria that we use to award additional points has also changed. Below are five categories of functional assessment points and examples of when they may be awarded.

Category A - 500 Points

- **Essential daily care needs cannot be met.**
- **A person cannot return home from hospital due to significant barriers within the home.**

Category B - 350 Points

- **A long term health condition is seriously worsened by current housing conditions.**
- **A person is unable to access and use essential first floor facilities due to long term and substantial dysfunction.**

Category C - 150 Points

- **A person is at risk when using stairs within the property, due to long term substantial dysfunction.**
- **A health condition is being made significantly worse due to social isolation and immobility.**

Category D - 50 Points

- **Steps and stairs or a bath are difficult to use, although a person can manage most days (with equipment or adaptations)**
- **Social isolation and immobility is making a health condition worse.**

Category E - No Points

- **There are no recognised barriers for carrying out day to day activities.**
- **Alternative solutions can be provided such as aids and adaptations.**

If you already have an application under the previous scheme, you will keep the points that you were awarded until there is a change in your circumstances.

If you are not happy with the assessment decision, you will have the right to appeal.

More information

You can find more information on our website at www.moray.gov.uk/housing

You can download a copy of the housing functional assessment form from our website or you can pick up a copy from your local access point.

For further information phone us on **0300 1234 566** or email housing@moray.gov.uk

Neighbour Nuisance and Antisocial Behaviour

Antisocial behaviour is any action which causes, or is likely to cause, alarm, distress, nuisance, or damage to property. It can include unacceptable noise levels, litter problems, dog fouling and also threats or violence towards individuals.



The Community Safety Partnership is committed to addressing antisocial behaviour within Moray. They have powers to implement certain measures when dealing with antisocial behaviour. The Partnership is dedicated to dealing with community safety issues and promoting positive behaviour, to make Moray a safe place to live and work.

You can report antisocial behaviour at any time of the day quickly and easily. You can contact the team by email on antisocialbehaviour@moray.gov.uk or you can report any issues through our website using the online form which can be accessed at <http://bit.ly/2faZFvu>. You can also phone us on **0300 1234 566**.

If your complaint is of a serious nature and requires an immediate response then please call the non-emergency Police Scotland number **101**.

Your complaint will be allocated one of three categories which are:

- **Category A** – Very serious antisocial behaviour, which normally includes criminal behaviour such as drug dealing, racial harassment or assault.
- **Category B** – Situations where the behaviour is likely to stop short of criminal activity but could be a deliberate attempt to cause disturbance to a neighbour. This may involve threats and harassment or disregard for others with loud music and parties.
- **Category C** – Issues solely between two neighbours and minor breach of tenancy agreements. This includes the use of common areas, maintenance, the use of boundaries, and noise.

We have recently changed our timescales for resolving category **B** and **C** complaints. This was after consultation with tenants and other stakeholders. The changes mean that category A complaints will be resolved within 20 days, category B complaints within 35 days and category C within 40 days.

No change is proposed for initial response times across each of the three categories. These will remain unchanged which means that tenants will be contacted within 1 working day for a category A complaint, 2 working days for a category B complaint and 5 working days for a category C complaint.

These extended timescales reflect new ways of partnership working. A panel of professionals from Police Scotland, Housing, Social Work, Education and an external mediation service meet to discuss challenging cases and agree courses of action.



Housing Investment Strategy for 2017/18

How we are spending your rent

We use your rent money to invest in your homes and neighbourhoods and the rent increase we've just introduced will make sure we can pay for improvements and repairs to the housing stock now and in the future. This year we will spend just over £11m on maintaining, upgrading and modernising our properties. Some projects have already started with others due to be carried out throughout 2017 and into early 2018.

Spending for each year covers a wide range of improvement works, including:-

- Capital Works - kitchens; heating; replacement windows and doors; medical adaptations
- Planned Maintenance – estates upgrades; garage upgrades, roof and fabric repairs
- Annual Maintenance – heating servicing; smoke detectors; external paintwork

The majority of improvement projects within the investment programme continue to be delivered through a partnership agreement with our Building Services Direct Labour Organisation (DLO), which is in place until April 2019.

Tenant survey

Our most recent tenant survey suggested that around 30% of you considered improvements to the heating and insulation of your homes as a priority. In order to deal with this and aim towards meeting the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH) by 2020, we are spending around £1.3m on heating replacements and £1.0m on roof and fabric repairs and insulation work.

Kitchens and bathrooms £1.65m

Around 300 kitchens will be fully replaced or partly upgraded during 2017/18. Within this programme we also upgrade bathrooms where it is needed and give you the opportunity to have showers fitted as part of the work for a small weekly increase in your rent. We expect 75 people to take up the offer of showers annually.



Windows and doors £0.75m

Our Capital Budget also funds the window and door replacement programme and a budget of £0.75m will allow us to fit new windows to around 250 homes in 2017/18 as well as carry out replacement of a number of doors. This programme will continue into future years to make sure that windows and doors are replaced when they reach the end of their life.



Other upgrades

As part of the Housing Investment Strategy we also carry out other upgrading works for example the re-rendering and external insulation of properties, other internal refurbishment projects and the replacement of external drain pipes and gutters. These programmes have been targeted to allow our housing stock to continue to meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard.



Planned maintenance £1.3m

Other work carried out under the heading of planned maintenance includes estate upgrades, works to our garage sites, safety and security related improvements. The yearly servicing budget, which amounts to £1.3m for 2017/18, is mainly spent on the annual servicing of gas, coal, oil fired and air source heat pump heating systems. The servicing of gas appliances in particular is an important safety and legal requirement and we put a high priority on making sure that all gas heating systems are serviced on an annual basis. The annual budget also funds a regular six-yearly programme of pre-paintwork repairs and external painting to make sure that the external fabric of your homes are maintained in good condition.

More details of the programme can be found on our website or contact us for more information.

Phone: **0300 1234 566**

Email: housing@moray.gov.uk

Estate Improvement Budget Consultation



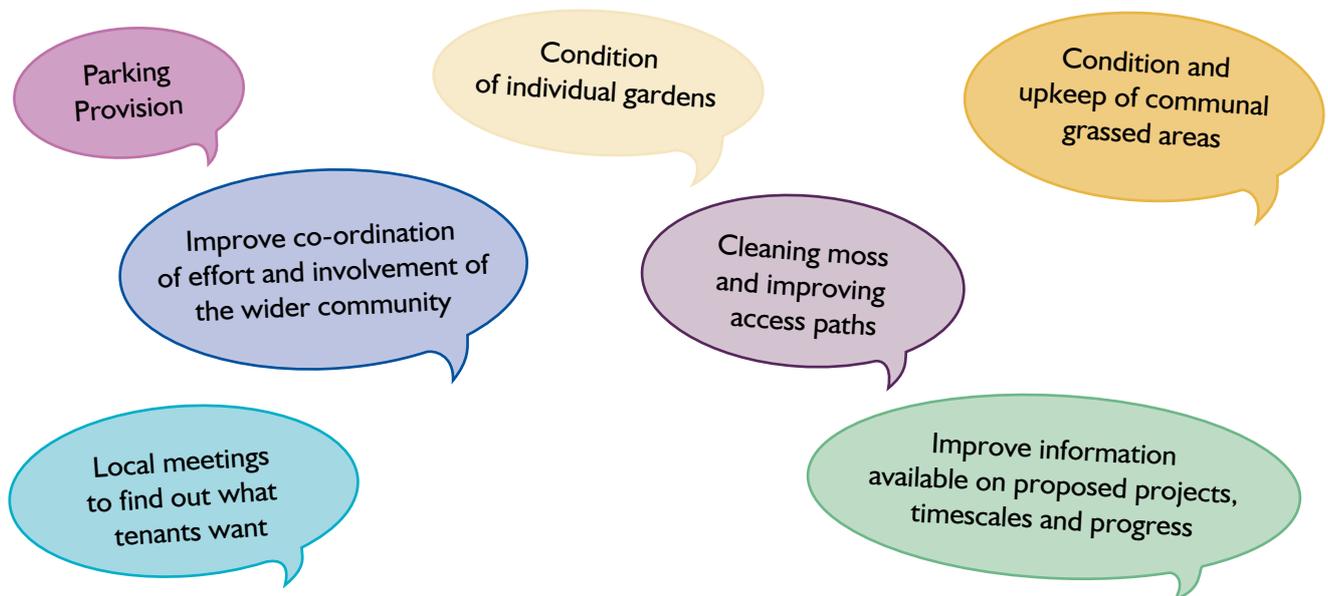
During late 2016 and early 2017 we consulted with tenants on how we could improve how we managed our estate upgrading budget to make sure that tenants and elected members had more say on how the budget is used.

Some of the areas we wished to look at included:

- changing the range of works that can be delivered
- how often estate walkabouts are carried out
- how we report on our plans for estate upgrades
- how we allocated the budget

We received a total of **119** returns and the feedback was generally supportive of the changes that had been suggested in the consultation.

63 people also made comments as part of the consultation and a number of common themes were highlighted as areas where tenants would like to see improvements. Comments included:



The consultation highlighted a number of issues around a lack of clarity and co-ordination about the environmental audits and the works that come from these. A report to our Communities Committee in March 2017 outlined the changes to our current arrangements. The main changes include:

- combining the tenant forum and area housing team budgets into a single estates improvement budget of **£100k** per year
- looking at how we could carry out improvements in estates where there were a mix of both Council and private dwellings
- elected members, tenants and officers working closely together to decide what projects should be prioritised
- looking at improvements to the way the works are planned, co-ordinated and supervised

The main way people can become involved in the process is through taking part in estate walkabouts that are being planned for September 2017. This will give an opportunity for elected members, tenants, homeowners and officers to discuss any projects that have already been identified for each area, or highlight any other possible projects. These projects would then be brought together and prioritised to form a list of works to be costed to decide whether which can be funded from the money allocated for the 2018/19 budget.

Should you wish to participate in the process and join us on an estate walkabout please contact us by phoning **0300 1234 566** or by email at tenantparticipation@moray.gov.uk.



The Scottish Social Housing Charter

We are responsible for a wide range of housing services which affect the quality of life of people in Moray. As a social landlord we must fill in an annual return to the Scottish Housing Regulator to make sure that we are providing landlord services that meet the standards set out in the Scottish Government's Social Housing Charter.

The first Charter came into effect on 1 April 2012 and has been reviewed by the Scottish Government. The revised Charter was approved by Parliament and came into effect from 1 April 2017. The full revised Charter can be found at: beta.gov.scot/publications/scottish-social-housing-charter-april-2017/

The Charter contains 16 outcomes and standards which social landlords must meet. They describe what tenants can expect social landlords to achieve, cover housing activities only, and are monitored, assessed and reported upon by the Scottish Housing Regulator.

The Charter sets out the standards and outcomes that:



Tenants can expect in terms of

Quality and value for money

The standard of their homes

Opportunities for communication and participation in the decisions that affect them

Homeless people can expect in terms of

Access to help and advice

The quality of temporary accommodation

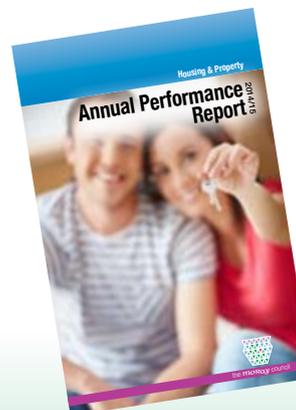
Continuing support to help access and keep a home

We have submitted our fourth Annual Return on the Charter and look forward to receiving our landlord report from the Scottish Housing Regulator. The landlord report will be available on their website, normally in late August 2017.

Our last annual performance report was well received and we would like to thank all of you who took the time to give us feedback. We are now using your feedback to develop our 2016/17 annual performance report in partnership with our tenant representatives.

If you have any thoughts or ideas or would like to be involved in developing our next performance report to tenants please contact us on **0300 1234 566** or email tenantparticipation@moray.gov.uk

Look out for your copy of our 2016/17 annual performance report which will be dropping through your letter box by the end of October.



Your Moray, your views: The Moray Growth Deal needs your feedback



The Moray Economic Partnership (MEP), a group working to expand and improve the economy in Moray, has recently launched its My Moray campaign to encourage people living in Moray to get behind the Moray Growth Deal. My Moray - the tagline or slogan used for the campaign - is asking locals to think about the priorities for Moray, with the aim of boosting economic growth and creating opportunities for people and businesses in the region.

The long-term plan centres around specific projects designed to transform the economy, encourage young people to live and work in the area and bring more and better jobs to the area, particularly for women because these are areas where Moray doesn't do as well as many other parts of Scotland.

As part of this, My Moray is asking locals to participate in a short survey to help with the development of the Moray Growth Deal bid.

A video has been created showing people from across the region sharing their vision of Moray, and several public events are planned where you can ask any questions you may have about the deal. All of your feedback will be looked at and used to prepare a final vision for the deal, and will also be used in discussions with Scottish and UK Governments later this year. You can watch the video and do the survey at www.mymoray.co.uk. You can also find regular updates across social media by searching 'My Moray' on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

This is an opportunity to be part of an ambitious plan that will deliver a better future for the people of Moray – don't miss the chance to have your say.

Community Council Elections



The current 4 year term of Community Council is about to end. Applications are open from 21 August - 28 September 2017 for volunteers to apply to be a Community Councillor.

A Community Council is a group of local volunteers formed to represent and promote the interests of their area. Their main role is to find out the views of the local community as a whole and to make sure that the views of local people are passed on to the relevant authority.

Are you interested?

For further information please contact the Community Council Liaison Officer on **01343 563047**.

Application forms can be downloaded from www.moray.gov.uk/communitycouncils

Getting involved in our decision making processes

We must develop and implement a strategy which sets out how we will involve you, our tenants in our decision making processes. Our Communities Committee approved our fourth tenant participation strategy on 7 March 2017 following a consultation with tenants and other stakeholders.

Congratulations to Mr Andrew Rust from Craigellachie who won our prize draw for £25 of high street shopping vouchers for giving us feedback on the draft strategy.

The overall aim of the strategy is to work in partnership with tenants to design and deliver good quality housing services. It has three main outcomes centred on encouraging and promoting involvement, influencing decisions and working together effectively. More information on the strategy can be found on our website at www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_95571.html

Your views are important in helping us to improve our services. We offer a wide range of opportunities for our tenants to get involved at a level that suits them such as:

- Joining the Moray Tenant Forum, an informal group who represent the tenants' views on housing issues. They meet every few months and help is available to cover things like travel expenses and childcare
- Joining the Service Improvement Panel, a group of tenants who will assess our services and make recommendations on how we can improve. Support is available from staff and also to cover expenses such as travel expenses and childcare
- Taking part in estate walkabouts to inspect the local area with councillors and housing staff. You can help us to identify issues and find solutions to address them
- Filling in satisfaction surveys
- Taking part in consultations on housing issues. A good way to be notified of these is by asking to join our register of interested tenants and we will contact you when there are consultations or reviews relevant to you

To find out more about how you can get involved phone us on **0300 1234 566** or email tenantparticipation@moray.gov.uk.

Help to improve your Tenants' Voice newsletter

We are looking to talk to tenants about how to improve this newsletter.

Is there something you would like to see?

Is it too wordy?

Do you get it often enough?

Do you have ideas for articles?

Do you like the design or layout?

We want to **invite you along to an informal event** in September to go over your ideas and suggestions. We realise that not everyone will be available or have the time to join us at this event so we also want to **form an online** group so that you can take part from the comfort of your home.

We will use your ideas to shape future editions of the Tenants' Voice. We will also tell you about how we used your feedback to make changes in an article. As a thank you to **those that take part**, either online or at the event, we will **enter you into a prize draw** for £25 of high street shopping vouchers.

To sign up you just need to tell us whether you are interested in the event or the online group and we will contact you with more details:

Phone: 0300 123 4566

Email: tenantparticipation@moray.gov.uk



Moray Tenants Partnership



Café Event

Moray Tenants Partnership is a group made up of social landlords from the Moray area. Their aim is to bring tenant groups together to share information and good practice.

The Partnership held a successful café event back in February at the Elgin Youth Café. This was an informal open afternoon which included a light lunch. Tenants from all social landlords in Moray were invited to come along for the afternoon or to drop in if they were passing.

Presentations were given by representatives from Moray Council, Grampian Housing Association, Osprey Housing and Castlehill Housing. During the presentations each landlord explained what tenant participation meant to them and how their tenants could get involved and have their say as to how their housing services are delivered.

The event was well attended with a good mix of tenants. There was an opportunity to ask questions and chat to each other to find out more about tenant participation and to make new connections and share ideas.



To find out more about how you can get involved in the Moray Tenants Partnership call us on **0300 1234 566** or email tenantparticipation@moray.gov.uk

We listen to your feedback and act on it



You said...

Most tenants responding to our rent consultation said we should build more new Council homes



We have increased the number of new build homes from 50 to 70 per year.

You said...

In our 2015 tenant survey, you highlighted a range of repairs issues including poor scheduling, quality of repairs, delays in capital works and staff communication issues.



We have set up working groups to look at improving the repairs service.

You said...

There has sometimes been a debt on the utility meter when moving in to your new home.



We have met with Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE) and agreed a process so that meters will have no debt showing.



Summer

WORDSEARCH

E	A	D	M	F	U	N	F	A	I	R	B	Q	I	Z
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P	Q	C	O	D	L	G	C	S	L	M	G	K	S	K

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Name:

Address:

Phone number:

Email address:

Please return to: Summer Competition, Housing & Property, PO Box 6760, Elgin, IV30 1BX

Congratulations

To Mrs Lorna Main from Buckie who was the winner of the £20 gift card for successfully completing the Tenants' Voice Winter Wordsearch competition.

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