

# VOICE

The Tenants'

Summer 2007

## CONTENTS....

Local Government Elections	1
Common Housing Register	2
Your View Matters	3
Best Kept Garden Competition	4
Bulky Uplift	5
Transfers and Mutual Exchanges	6
We Want You To Get Involved	7
Forum News	8&9
The Right To Repair Scheme	10
Moray Tenants' Conference 2007	11
Housing Budget 2006/2007	12
Housing Performance 2006/2007	13
New Information Leaflets	14
Paws For Thought	15
Forres Area Credit Union	16

## Local Government Elections

Local government elections were held on 3 May 2007. Following the elections, the Council met on 9 May and decided to make some changes to its Committee structures. Before the election, the Community Services Committee considered housing and social work business. The Moray Tenants' Core Group had two representatives on this Committee for the housing business.

On 9 May the Council agreed that a new Education and Social Work Committee will take on responsibility for education and social work issues, and that the Policy Committee will consider Resources and Service Reform and Communities issues, with a Chairman for Resources and Service Reform and a Chairman for Communities. The Chairman for Communities, Councillor Eric McGillivray, will have responsibility for housing issues, as well as regeneration, community planning, voluntary sector, social inclusion, equality issues, community safety and anti social behaviour.

The Council has agreed that these new Committee arrangements provide an opportunity to review the way in which tenants can be involved in making decisions about issues that affect them. Officers have been asked to prepare a report on this for the first Policy Committee on 13 June 2007. Any proposals will be discussed with the Moray Council Tenants' Core Group and Area Forums.

## Councillor McGillivray

Born in Elgin, I have lived in Hopeman for nearly thirty years. I genuinely believe that Moray is a unique place to live and provides a great quality of life.

Over the last 29 years, I have been actively involved with many of the local community organisations within Moray and as the local councillor for Burghsea (Hopeman & Burghead) I sat on twenty-nine committees, as chairman of seven, twelve of which were local community organisations. Along with other members of the local community I have been responsible for many different projects within the area over the years.

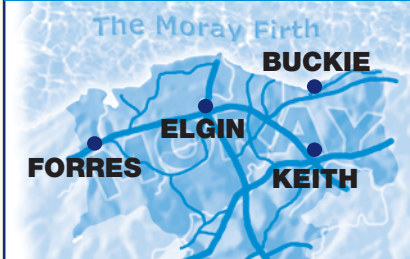
I am acutely aware of the shortage of affordable housing in Moray and the long waiting lists for council housing but I will do my utmost to try and resolve these problems.

I am 100% committed to the welfare and wellbeing of the residents of Moray, and I will continue to work hard for Moray as Joint Chair of the Policy Committee with special responsibility for Housing.



Councillor McGillivray

## Your local area housing office



### BUCKIE

01542 837200

Buckie Area Housing Office,  
13 Cluny Square, Buckie, AB56 1AJ.  
E-mail: [buckieaccess@moray.gov.uk](mailto:buckieaccess@moray.gov.uk)

### ELGIN

01343 563429/563433

Elgin Area Housing Office,  
Council Office, High Street, Elgin,  
IV30 1BX.

E-mail:  
[housing.reception@moray.gov.uk](mailto:housing.reception@moray.gov.uk)

### FORRES

01309 694000

Forres Area Housing Office,  
Auchernack, High Street, Forres,  
IV36 1DX.

E-mail: [forresaccess@moray.gov.uk](mailto:forresaccess@moray.gov.uk)

### KEITH

01542 885500

Keith Area Housing Office, The  
Institute, Mid Street, Keith, AB55 5BJ.  
E-mail: [keithhousing@moray.gov.uk](mailto:keithhousing@moray.gov.uk)



HAPPY TO TRANSLATE



Log on to: [www.moray.gov.uk](http://www.moray.gov.uk)

# Common Housing Register

**A new way of applying for social rented housing in Moray and Aberdeenshire is set to be introduced later this year. The new Common Housing Register (CHR) will provide a simpler and fairer way of applying for social housing in the area.**

## **What is a Common Housing Register (CHR)?**

Currently, anyone applying for social housing in Moray and Aberdeenshire, (housing provided by the council or housing associations), must apply and fill in a separate application form for each landlord. Under the CHR, applicants will fill in a single, shared online application form and they can then be considered for housing by all social landlords chosen (that is the Council and housing associations) with properties in that area. This makes the process of applying for housing easier, simpler and fairer.

## **The online application form**

Under the CHR, applicants will apply for housing directly by filling in an online application form. This online application provides a unique approach, providing a single point of access and advice. The application form is simple to use. It 'intelligently' moves from question to question depending on the answers given, making filling it in both simple and fast.

Housing advice will be displayed at relevant points of the application form including information on the number of properties housing providers have in the area, stock turnover in that area and so on. This will help applicants make a more informed choice of where they want to live. Applicants will only answer questions relevant to those providers who they have indicated they want to apply for housing with. Details of any specific needs of applicants are noted, for example the size of their family, the size of property they need or their preferred landlord. Once the form is filled, the information will be sent to the relevant providers. Providers will then assess the application in line with their Allocations Policy.

## **Why do we need a CHR?**

There are several reasons for providing a CHR. Social housing is provided by more organisations than ever before. It can be difficult to know who to apply to for housing and one person may need to apply to 3 or 4 (or more!) different landlords. Applicants need to find out about - and apply separately to - all the different landlords offering housing in their area. This can be very difficult and confusing for some people. The CHR should help solve this problem.

- It will bring together the Councils and social housing providers in Moray and Aberdeenshire. It will provide applicants with a simpler way of applying for social housing, with only one form needed for all landlords.
- It will maximise access to housing. It will improve access to housing providers and make sure that maximum advice and information is available to allow applicants to make an informed choice about where to live
- From a landlord's perspective, it will be easier to measure the true level of demand in an area. This in turn allows more accurate planning for the future.

## **What are the benefits of a CHR?**

The CHR will provide applicants with a wider choice of landlords and property types along with a simpler and less time consuming method of applying for rented housing.

- Applicants will have one application form to fill in. If you want to apply to more than one landlord, you will be able to register with every landlord participating in the CHR using a single application form, rather than having to apply to each of the landlords separately.



- It can be difficult to know which landlords have housing in what area and whether landlords have housing to suit your needs. For example, if you are only looking for a four bedroom property in Burghead and a particular provider has no stock there, then you would not apply to be housed by them. All partner landlords who have housing in Moray and Aberdeenshire will have access to information on the housing stock provided by other partners. This means that staff will be in a better position to advise individuals on which landlords might have housing to suit their needs.
- The creation of a single list of people actively seeking housing within a given area - both as first-time applicants and tenants wanting to transfer – give us a more accurate estimate of housing need. This can help in strategic planning within the housing market area, assisting us to make sure that housing needs are being effectively assessed and met.

### Who are the partner housing providers in the CHR?

The partners are:

- **The Moray Council**
- **Aberdeenshire Council**
- **Aberdeenshire Housing Partnership**
- **Moray Housing Partnership**
- **Grampian Housing Association**
- **Hanover Scotland**
- **Langstane Housing Association**
- **Castlehill/Homehunt**

### What progress has been made so far?

We have been working together with partners and have already carried out a lot of background work. The partners have already agreed:

- the format of the new CHR online application form; and
- how the CHR will operate and the computer technology that is needed to run it.

Tenants and residents are among the key groups who will be consulted as the CHR develops. The Tenants' Core Group and Tenant Forum members were invited to a presentation on the development of the CHR in May.

For more information please contact

**Christine Bettison,**

Senior Housing Needs Officer (Allocations)

 [christine.bettison@moray.gov.uk](mailto:christine.bettison@moray.gov.uk)

 01343 563573

# Your view matters!!

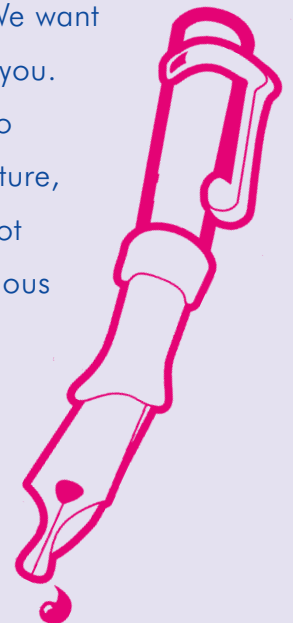
**The 2007 Tenant Survey is about to start. We will choose about 2000 tenants at random and post them a questionnaire.**

We want to know what you think about us – good and bad. We want to know what is important to you. We will use what you tell us to improve what we do in the future, and to measure whether or not we have improved since previous surveys.

The last survey showed that levels of satisfaction with housing staff and services had all increased since 2001 and we were pleased with the results. However, there is always room for improvement.

You might be chosen at random to receive a questionnaire this time. If you do, please take a few minutes to fill it in and return it to us. Every questionnaire counts.

When the results of the survey are available, we will tell you about them in the Tenants' Voice.



**Watch this space!**

# Best Kept Garden COMPETITION

**Do you enjoy gardening? Do you have green fingers? Is there a little patch of green somewhere on your property that you have lovingly tended? Want to show off your achievements in the garden?**

**Then enter The Moray Council Garden Competition. Whether it is a huge back garden, a tiny front garden, a collection of tubs on your balcony, or even a patch of land you share with your neighbours, we want your entry.**



## Top gardening tips

To mark the launch of our annual gardening competition, these top tips will help to kick-start growth in your garden.



June is a rewarding month in the garden as you start to see the fruits of your labours. Herbaceous borders come alive with colour and the air is filled with the sweet scent of summer.

## Lilies

Potted lilies will be growing quickly now and as their flowers start developing they will need some support. Push several canes into the compost around the edge of the pot, linking them up with string to provide stability. If border lilies are not supported by neighbouring plants, use stakes around these too.



planting out. Pots and trays of bedding plants can be placed on the patio during the day, but moved back under cover at night. Give them a boost by watering them in with liquid fertiliser.

## Lawns

Mow lawns more frequently and lower the cutting height if grass is growing very strongly

Looking around Moray, there are many talented Moray Council tenants who take great pride in putting much effort into developing some great displays. Whether your garden is large or postage stamp size – be it window boxes or tubs – please consider entering the annual competition. Or, why not talk to a Council tenant neighbour who may be reluctant to enter, but could be talked round!

Certificates and vouchers are awarded for first, second and third places in each of the four Moray housing areas.

Judging will take place on Thursday 26 and Friday 27 July 2007. This year the judges will be from Threaplands Ltd in Lhanbryde.

If you want to enter, fill in the form below and return it to your local area housing office by **Friday 20 July 2007**. Good luck!

**Garden Competition**

name \_\_\_\_\_

address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ postcode \_\_\_\_\_ phone number \_\_\_\_\_

garden (please tick) Front  Back  Both



# BULKY UPLIFT

The Council works hard to discourage and eliminate environmental problems such as fly tipping or illegal dumping. We offer a bulky waste collection service that allows you to have large items of waste collected from your home.

White goods such as fridges, freezers, cookers, washing machines and tumble dryers and so on, can be collected free of charge by contacting the bulky uplift service.

Other bulky waste that **CAN** be collected includes:

- All items of free standing furniture
- All electrical goods
- Carpets, rugs, vinyl, bedding etc
- General waste (non-recyclable) – Max 10 bags

There is a charge for this service of £15.38 per uplift that must be paid in advance. A 'back door' collection service is available, upon request, to residents who have a disability or are infirm.

Some items are **NOT** suitable for bulky uplift:

- any liquid in containers (e.g. cans of paint)
- materials from house improvements/renovations (eg asbestos, bathroom suites, cement blocks, central heating boiler or radiators, doors, fitted kitchens, fuel tanks, gas cylinders, glass, large planks of wood, plasterboard, skirting boards, storage heaters, window frames)
- garden materials (earth or turf, garden sheds or greenhouses, hedging, trees)
- car parts

Goods to be removed by the bulky uplift service must be sited at the normal collection point from 7.30am on the day of collection.

We have also extended the opening hours of our recycling centres to make it as easy as possible for you to dispose of bulky waste and to promote the

**3 Rs of Reduce Reuse Recycle**

**How to contact the bulky uplift service**

 [www.moray.gov.uk](http://www.moray.gov.uk) (and fill in the online form)

 01343 557073



## IS SOMEONE YOU KNOW COMMITTING BENEFIT FRAUD?



The Government estimates that Welfare Benefit Fraud costs each and every family in the United Kingdom £80 per year. The Moray Council is committed to protecting public funds and tackling benefit fraud and has a dedicated anti-fraud team who investigate allegations of suspected Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit fraud.

Typical examples of benefit fraud include:

- People who work but do not declare this when they claim benefit
- People who claim they are single but actually live with a partner
- People who claim from an address but do not live there
- People who do not tell us their full income, savings or capital

DO NOT LET FRAUDSTERS TAKE MONEY DIRECTLY OUT OF **YOUR** POCKET.

If you suspect someone is claiming Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Benefit to which they are not entitled **PLEASE TELL US ABOUT IT.**

You can call us on 01343 563611 or write to the Benefit Fraud Team, Moray Council, Revenues Section, High Street, Elgin, IV30 1BX. Any information you give will be treated in the strictest confidence.

# What is the difference between a *transfer* and a *mutual exchange*?

We have a housing list, which is an open waiting list and includes the waiting list and the transfer list.

- *The waiting list includes people who are not already our tenants but who would like a council property in Moray.*
- *The transfer list includes people who are already our tenants but who would like to transfer from their current home to another.*

## Transfer

**Due to the volume of applicants on the housing list and the low level of vacancies that arise each year in our stock, you may have to wait a considerable length of time for a suitable property to become available. The length of time that you may have to wait for an offer will depend on:**

- *how quickly the type of home you have requested becomes available in the area you would like*
- *how much of a priority your situation is, compared to others on the list waiting for the same type of property*

**Once an offer is made, you can then decide to either accept or reject this offer.**

## Mutual exchange

**A mutual exchange is where two or more tenants agree, with their landlord's permission, to swap properties. This can be a faster and easier way to move as you arrange your own move and don't have to go on the transfer list and wait for a vacancy.**

## *How can I find out what other properties are available to exchange with?*

There is a copy of the mutual exchange register in your local area housing office. We also have an online mutual exchange search facility where you can either:

- *search for properties in the area that you want to move to;*
- or
- *search for people who want to move to the area where you currently live.*

For more information please see our website [www.moray.gov.uk](http://www.moray.gov.uk).

**If you find a property that you want to consider for a mutual exchange, contact your area housing office for advice on what you should do next.**

You can also look at national registers such as Homeswapper. For more information please see their website [www.homeswapper.co.uk](http://www.homeswapper.co.uk).

## More information

If want more information or want to apply for a transfer or exchange, please contact your local area housing office or visit our website.

# We want **YOU** to get involved

You live in a Council house – the decisions that are made about Council housing affect you! These decisions might be about the amount of rent that you pay, the services you receive, when your house is improved, the condition of your neighbourhood and so on... So, how these decisions are made is important – and how you might be involved in these decisions is central to our Tenant Participation Strategy.

We agreed a Tenant Participation Strategy for 2003 – 2006, following consultation with tenants. We are currently revising this strategy with the Moray Tenants Core Group and Area Forums. Those of you who came along to the Tenants Conference in October may have attended a discussion session on this.

We support tenant participation through a network of Area Forums. Please look at the article on Forum News. This brings tenants in an area together, to discuss the issues that concern them. From time to time, we might write to all tenants about a particular aspect of housing – for example, we wrote to all tenants about the restructuring of rents. Around half of tenants sent us comments as a result.

## ***What if I don't want to be in an Area Forum?***

You might not want to join an organised group, or you might find it difficult to attend meetings, but would you like to give us your views about your house, your neighbourhood and so on in some other way? How would you like to have your say? What are the issues that matter most to you?

We want to give you more opportunities to express your views to us:

- ***A tenant consultation register.***  
We would like to build up a list of tenants who would be interested in giving their views from home, or who just want to attend the occasional meeting.
- ***Tenant Participation Roadshows.***  
We would like to trial holding a roadshow involving tenants and Council staff, which will move between places offering information and advice and asking for opinions.
- ***A young tenants evening.***  
The idea would be to hold some sort of social event for young tenants which would also have part of the evening where they were asked about various housing matters.

## CUT OUT AND RETURN

**DO YOU AGREE WITH THESE SUGGESTIONS? CAN YOU THINK OF OTHER WAYS WE CAN GET TENANTS INVOLVED? PLEASE TELL US WHAT YOU THINK.**

<b>Do you agree with our three suggestions for getting tenants involved?</b>	<b>YES</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>NO</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>If not which ones do you disagree with?</b>				
<b>Can you suggest any other ways of getting tenants involved?</b>				

**YOU DO NOT NEED TO GIVE US YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS IF YOU ONLY ANSWERED THESE QUESTIONS.**

<b>I WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION:</b>	<b>PLEASE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></b>
<b>I would like a full copy of the Draft Tenant Participation Strategy</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>I would like contact information for my local forum</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>I would like to discuss setting up a new forum</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>I would be interested in joining a tenant consultation register.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Your name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

**Please send the completed form to us at: Housing Planning and Development Team, Moray Council Headquarters, 1 High Street, Elgin. IV30 1BX or hand this in at any Area Housing Office or Access Point**


## Bilbohall Estate Forum

The Bilbohall Estate Forum has continued to be very active since the last issue of the Tenants Voice. The Forum continue to hold regular monthly meetings. Items which have been discussed include garages, sheds and parking areas.

The Forum is soon to consult all the tenants on the Estate regarding the condition of shed doors and facias. This info will then be used in the planning of future environmental budget spending. Recently work started on resurfacing and improving the drying areas behind the flats on Glenlossie Drive. This is where the forum have decided to spend the 2006/07 budget.

All Tenants on the Estate are welcome to attend the forum meetings which are now held in the Cedarwood Centre on Edgar Road on the first Wednesday of each month. For further information contact:

 **Steven Christie,**  
Chairperson  
01343 540524

 **Moira Sutherland,**  
Secretary  
01343 547490

## Forres Tenants' Forum

The Forres Area Tenants' Forum covers the areas of Brodie, Dyke, Findhorn, Kinloss, Half Davoch, Rafford, Dallas, Burghead, Hopeman, Duffus, Kellas and Alves, as well as Forres. This widespread area has approx. 940 council houses.

The Forres Area Tenant's Forum is always looking for new members. We meet regularly in the GP Room of Forres House at 10.30 am. Our next meetings will be on 13 July and 10 August. If you would

like to get involved please just come along. If you would like to know more about what we do please contact:

 **Heather Anderson,**  
Vice Chairperson  
01309 671154

## Lossiemouth Tenants' Forum

The Lossiemouth Tenants Forum have used part of their environmental budget for 2006/2007 on fencing projects at Kellas Avenue and Hillview Place.

At their meeting in February the Committee agreed the projects to be funded from the 2007/2008 budget. Coulardhill Terrace is the only street which will have new fences this year. The remainder of the budget will be spent on installing security lights over the external doors of properties where they have none. Any tenant who does not have an external light should inform their housing officer or a member of the Tenants Forum Committee.

Committee members continue to work with Committee members from other forums in Moray to get the best for the tenants of Moray through working groups at the Scottish Executive, Communities Scotland, The Regional Forum and the Moray Council. These include affordable rents, levels of service, upgrading properties to achieve the 2015 Scottish Housing Standard and improving the repair service.

All tenants are members of the Tenants Forum and can attend the committee meetings which are held on the second Tuesday of the month in the Seaview Suite of the Lossiemouth Town Hall. If you wish to get more involved you can join the Committee and help us carry out the necessary work to improve the tenants' lot.

For more information please contact:

 **Charles French,**  
Chairperson  
07909 752023

## Roths Tenants' Forum

Roths Tenants' Forum is a small but active group which is taking forward a number of environmental and safety issues in the town.

The Forum meets every 4/5 weeks in the Grant Hall at 7pm. All Roths tenants are welcome to attend. For more information please contact:

**Audrey Murray,**  
Chairperson  
01340 831703



The New Elgin Tenants' Forum will be meeting at 6.30pm in the Cottar Hoose on the following dates during 2007; 24 July, 25 September and 20 November.

The forum is always looking for new members with new ideas. If you would like to join the forum or if you want to put forward any ideas please contact either:



**Muriel Ettles,**  
Chairperson  
01343 545394 or



**Gayle Henderson,**  
Secretary  
01343 552891

## New Elgin Tenants' Forum

The New Elgin Tenants' Forum is a small but busy group as two of our members are also office bearers in the Tenants' Core Group. We have already attended several of the training sessions from the Community Capacity Building Calendar this year and think the Funder Finder session will come in useful for locating extra money for the forum. The training is offered to anyone who is interested in working with a community group and in most cases is free.

A large part of last years budget was spent on fencing for a row of one bedroom houses occupied mostly by elderly tenants. Previously there was either no fencing at all, ragged bushes or broken fencing. As you can imagine, the fencing has made a huge difference to the area. This year will see more fencing being erected contributing to community safety and giving the estate a neater appearance.

We have regular estate walk-about looking at ways to improve the area and would be pleased to hear from anyone with ideas on this.

## Spey Coast Tenants' Forum

The Forum has used this years environmental budget to fund fencing projects in Fochabers, and fencing and car parking projects in Buckie.

The Spey Coast Forum is always looking to attract new members, who will be made very welcome if they wish to join. The Spey Coast Forum meets in Buckie High School at 7.30 p.m. on the last Thursday of each month, apart from a short summer break. For more information please contact:



**Gilbert Grant,**  
Chairperson  
01542 839528

## Other areas

If you would like to know more about how you can influence housing services, but there is not a forum in your area, please contact:



**Fiona Geddes,**  
Policy Officer  
01343 563588



fiona.geddes@moray.gov.uk

# What is the **RIGHT TO REPAIR** scheme?

**T**he 'Right to Repair' scheme is your legal entitlement to have certain small urgent response repairs carried out by us within timescales laid down under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

The right to repair scheme covers certain repairs, known as 'qualifying repairs', which cost less than £350 to carry out.

These include repairs to:

- unsafe power or lighting sockets or electrical fittings
- the electricity or gas supply
- blocked flues to fires or boilers
- external windows, doors or locks which are not secure
- the space or water heating systems, if no other sources of heating are available
- toilets which won't flush (unless there is another toilet in the home)
- blocked or leaking drains
- blocked sinks, baths or basins
- the water supply
- leaking or flooding from pipes, tanks or cisterns
- unsafe floorboards or stairs
- unsafe access to the property (for example, an unsafe path)
- loose banisters or handrails
- a broken extractor fan for a kitchen or bathroom with no external window or door.

When you report a repair to us that is a 'qualifying repair' we will:

- tell you how long it should take to fix the problem;
- briefly explain your rights under the right to repair scheme;
- give you the contact details for the DLO, and at least one other contractor from the list of approved alternative contractors;
- arrange for you to be at home to let the contractor in.

**How long do repairs take under the scheme?**

Depending on the urgency of the repair, it has to be carried out within one, three or seven working days. For example:

- a blocked flue, drain, toilet, sink or bath should be repaired within one working day
- a leak from a pipe, tank or cistern should be repaired within one working day
- a problem with the heating should be repaired within one working day
- a loose banister or handrail should be repaired within three working days
- a broken extractor fan should be repaired within seven working days.

**What if I'm not there when the contractor arrives?**

If you're not home at the arranged time to let in the DLO, the repair work will be cancelled and you'll need to start the process again.

# Moray Tenants' Conference 2007

## **What happens if the repair isn't done in time?**

If the DLO doesn't start the work by the last day of the time limit set, you can call another contractor approved by the council. They will then arrange to do the work instead, but you can't use a contractor who isn't on the approved council list. We keep a list of approved contractors. In line with the Right to Repair Scheme, we will write and tell you once a year who the approved contractors are.

We will then have to pay you £15 in compensation to make up for the inconvenience. If the second contractor doesn't finish the job within the time limit, you'll be entitled to further compensation of £3 for every day over the time limit until the repair is done. The maximum amount of compensation you can receive is £100.

You'll also be entitled to £15 compensation if:

- the first contractor starts the work but doesn't finish it by the end of the time limit, or
- no other contractor is available, in which case the first contractor will have to do the work.

If you have rent arrears, we do not have to pay you the compensation, but will reduce the amount you owe instead.

If the contractor can't get the repair work done due to circumstances beyond their control (such as severe weather conditions) the time limit may be extended and you won't get compensation. We will let you know if this is the case.

Following the success of last years Tenants' Conference, plans are well under way for this years event on Thursday 13 September 2007 in Elgin Town Hall. The theme of this years conference is 'Local Connections' and a full programme is planned.

Speakers for the event will include Moray Councillors and officers and a local tenant's representative. There will also be a choice of workshops available on a variety of topics. An open panel is also on the agenda which will give delegates an opportunity to ask questions. A number of organisations will also be on hand with displays and information for tenants. There will also be a free prize draw for all those attending with prizes donated from local businesses and individuals. The event organisers have taken the comments raised from last years event and used them in the planning for this year. Once again assistance for those who require transport for themselves and any carers will be organised and transport costs for others will be met on production of valid receipts. Child care costs will also be met on production of valid receipts. To book your place, just fill in the booking form below or pick up a booking form from your local area housing office or access point.

If you want more information on the conference please contact me or any member of your local tenants' forum and we will do our best to help.

### **Steven Christie**

Chairperson of the Moray Council Tenants' Core Group

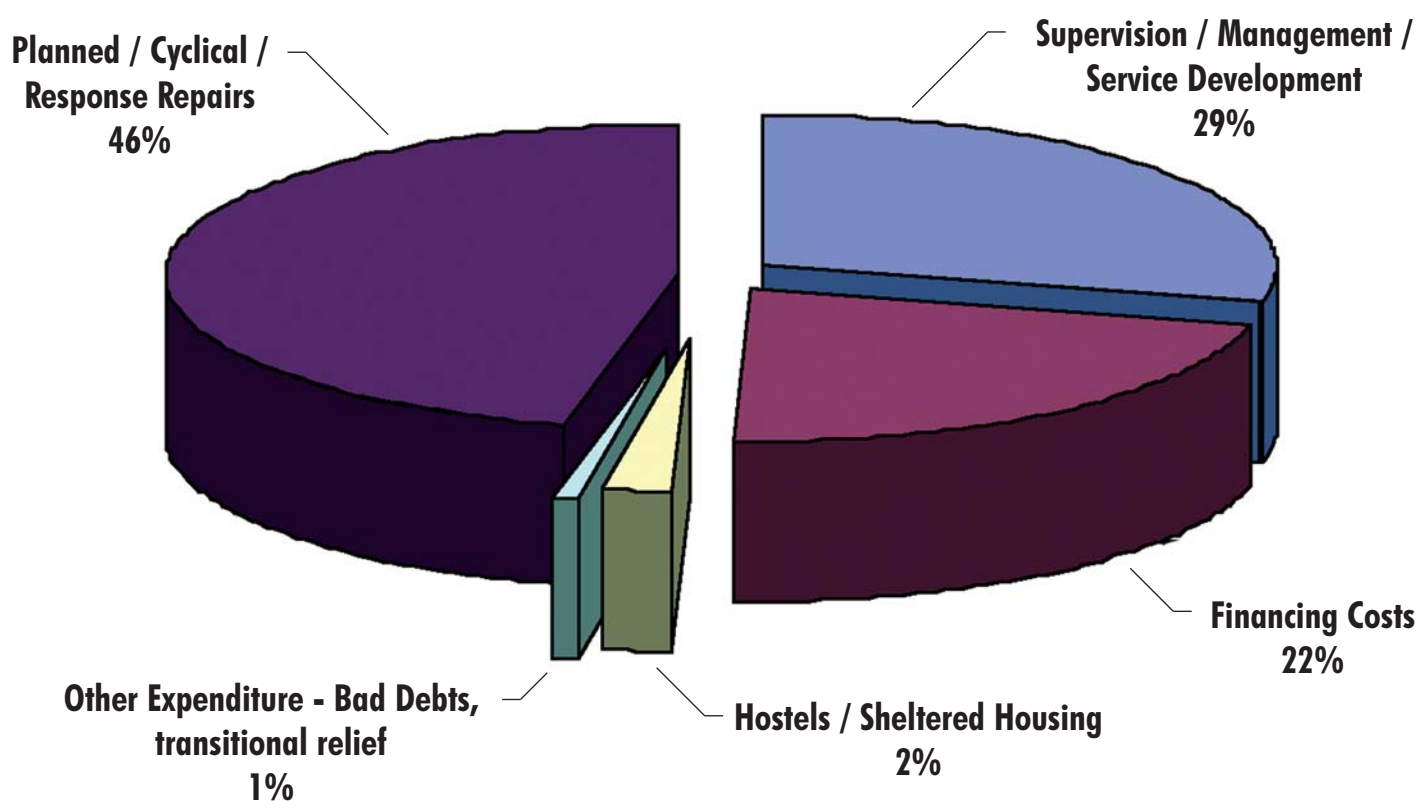
☎ 01343 540524

✉ [stevenchristie672@btinternet.com](mailto:stevenchristie672@btinternet.com)

# Housing Budget 2006/2007

## How your rent will be spent:

**Housing Revenue Account -  
Proposed Expenditure 2007/2008  
= £12,607,000**



### **Supervision / Management / Service Development**

= Salaries, employer costs, office costs

### **Hostels / Sheltered Housing**

= Costs associated with running these specialised types of housing

### **Planned Maintenance / Cyclical repairs**

= Improvement works and regular maintenance to Moray Council housing stock

### **Bad & Doubtful Debts**

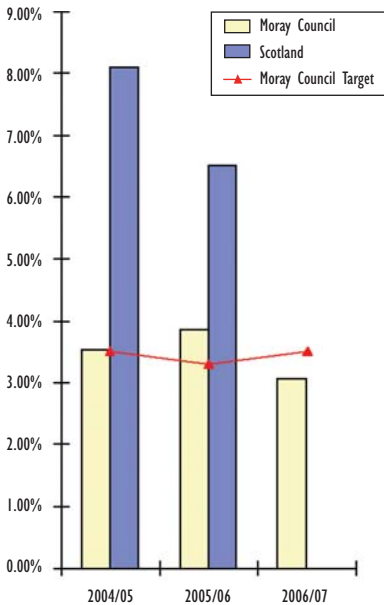
= Debts to be written off

# Housing Performance 2006/2007

## ARREARS

### Rent Arrears

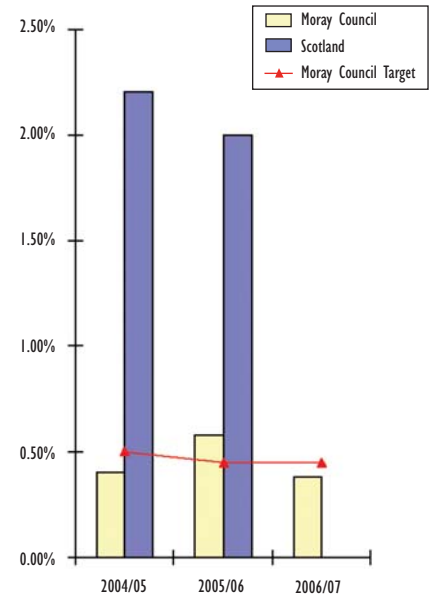
Tenant's rent arrears on house and garage rents in 2006/07 were 3.08% of all rents reduced from 3.85% in 2005/2006, and well below our target of 3.5%. Sixteen tenants were evicted during the year for rent arrears.



### Re-letting Empty Properties

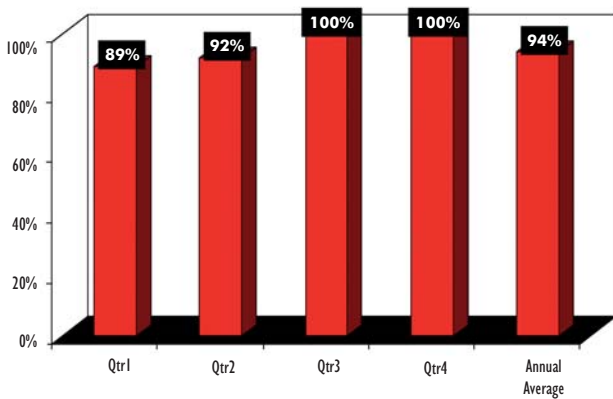
During 2006/07 rent lost due to empty properties was 0.49% of all rents – down from 0.56% in 2005/06. This performance just fell short of our target of 0.45%. Minimising rent lost in this way means the maximum amount of money is available for maintenance and improvements to our housing stock.

## VOIDS



## COMPLAINTS

### % within 20 day target



### Formal Complaints

Moray Council has a Formal Complaints procedure and the Council aims to ensure a reply to complaints within 20 working days. As shown in the graph, we have continued to improve our response rates throughout 2006/7, 94% of complaints received their response on time. The Housing Service aims to improve this further and meet time scales in 100% of cases in 2007/8.

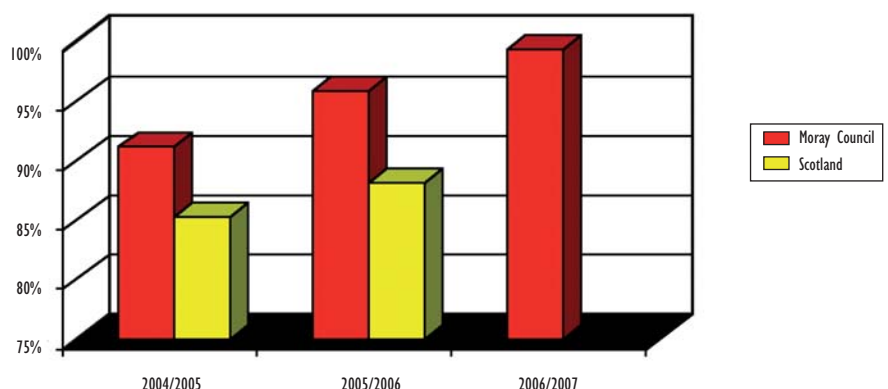


### Repairs

Moray Council continues to improve its performance on repairs year on year, showing a marked improvement on the number of repairs completed within target time-scales:

- Emergency – within 2 hours
- Urgent – within 1 working day
- Priority – within 5 working days
- Ordinary – within 20 working days

## REPAIRS



# New information leaflets

We have developed a new range of information leaflets that give you up-to-date information on issues that may affect you and your tenancy. The leaflets cover a range of topics from rent arrears to ending your tenancy with us. All of the leaflets contain information that you may find useful and are in a user-friendly format, using questions and answers. They have all been approved by the Plain English Campaign, which means that they all use plain language and are easy to read.

You can get a free copy of any of our leaflets from your area housing office. You can also read and download them on our website at [www.moray.gov.uk](http://www.moray.gov.uk).

The leaflets available include:

- **Ending your tenancy with us**
- **Gas servicing**
- **Neighbour disputes and antisocial behaviour**
- **Qualifying occupiers**
- **Rent arrears**
- **Shared repairs**
- **Subletting your home**
- **Taking in a lodger**
- **What should I do if a council tenant dies?**



## The Moray Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

citizens  
advice  
scotland

...was established in 1979 and provides free, confidential, impartial and independent advice to the people of Moray. The CAB deals with a variety of issues ranging from consumer problems, debt, benefit information and employment to housing and relationship issues.

**The CAB works in partnership with the Moray Council's Housing Needs Section on homelessness enquiries and with Trading Standards on multiple debt issues.**

The Moray CAB now provides a new independent advice and assistance service to service users of the NHS who have concerns about the service that they have received. The Moray CAB has also entered into a partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support and the Pension Service to provide information and support to people affected by cancer, their family members and carers.

**The Moray CAB Office is at:**

**30-32 Batchen Street  
Elgin**



**Phone: 01343 550088**

### CAB OPENING HOURS

<b>Monday</b>	<b>9.30am</b>	<b>3.30pm</b>
<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>9.30am</b>	<b>3.30pm</b>
<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>9.30am</b>	<b>12.30pm</b>
<b>Thursday</b>	<b>9.30am</b>	<b>12.30pm</b>
<b>Friday</b>	<b>9.30am</b>	<b>12.30pm</b>
<b>Saturday</b>	<b>10am</b>	<b>12noon</b>

**In addition, phone-only advice sessions are available on Wednesdays and Thursdays between 12.30pm and 3.30pm.**

The Moray CAB has a dedicated team of volunteers who freely give their time to assist their fellow citizens. It is always looking for volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering contact **Alistair or Jim on 01343 548421**. Anyone can volunteer. You do not have to come with formal qualifications or a vast amount of knowledge. Full training is provided and there are opportunities for personal development and specialising in any aspect of work, for example employment or benefits.

assistance

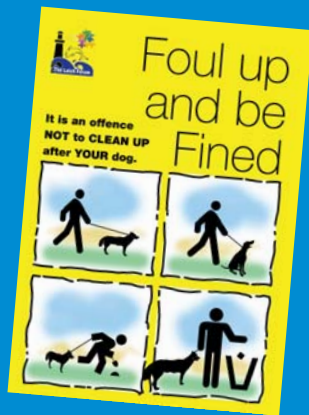
advice

help

information

# 'Paws' for thought

**The problem of dog fouling is a concern throughout Moray. It is not only a nuisance and antisocial but also a potential danger and health risk.**



As a responsible dog owner, here is what you can do to help prevent this problem:

- Always carry bags to clear up after your dog.
- Every time your dog makes a mess, '**BAG IT TIE IT AND BIN IT**'.
- Never let your dog out alone.

## WHAT HAPPENS TO PEOPLE WHO DON'T CLEAN UP AFTER THEIR DOG?

The Scottish Executive brought in a law that makes it an offence for people not to clean up **IMMEDIATELY** after a dog under their control and dispose of the mess in the proper way. The law covers all open spaces, including grass areas, pavements and communal back gardens. There are a few exceptions, for example, if you have a guide dog. But, for most people who fail to clean up after their dog, there is a £40 fine (this goes up to £60 if you don't pay it within 28 days). It's much cheaper and cleaner to pick up after your dog.

Remember, dog fouling is an offence and you could be prosecuted and fined if you fail to follow these simple rules. There are no excuses.

## I READ THAT DOG MESS CAN BE DANGEROUS TO HEALTH – IS THAT TRUE?

Yes, dog mess contains parasites and bacteria that are dangerous to other people and other dogs. Young children are particularly at risk, and dogs can pick up distemper, tapeworms, hookworms and other parasites. You should make sure that if you get dog wormed, as worms get passed out in dog mess and increase the risk of spreading these diseases. Be good to yourself and your dog – bag it, tie it and bin it!

## BAG IT, TIE IT, BIN IT

Free plastic dog tidy bags are available from Moray Council Access Points and from your local library. Simply, 'bag it, tie it and bin it.' Dog waste can then be disposed of in any litter bin or dog waste bin. If none are available nearby, you should be carry the waste home where it can be disposed of with your normal household waste.

## RESPONSIBLE DOG OWNERSHIP

- Train your dog in elementary obedience.
- Never let your dog out alone.
- Keep your dog on a lead anywhere near a road or where there are other animals.
- Train your dog not to foul in public places. If it does, make sure that you '**BAG IT, TIE IT AND BIN IT**'.
- Remember your dog's bark can be a nuisance.
- Identify your dog preferably by having it chipped.
- Register your pet with a vet of your choice.
- Have your dog wormed regularly.

If you have a complaint about dog fouling in your area, contact the Council's Environmental Health Section who will contact the dog owner and try and resolve the problem.



If you live or work in the Forres area, you could ...

# SAVE SAFELY with us!

£ for CHRISTMAS

£ for a HOLIDAY

£ for a RAINY DAY

£ for WHATEVER **YOU** LIKE!

## FORRES AREA Credit Union

✉ 138 High Street, FORRES, IV36 1NP

☎ Phone 01309 676735

✉ E-mail [facu@phonecoop.coop](mailto:facu@phonecoop.coop)

### YOUR local savings and loans co-operative offers

- ✓ Secure saving, regulated by the FSA, with an annual dividend
- ✓ Options for making deposits include Standing Orders
- ✓ Loans, according to your saving record, at low interest
- ✓ Friendly, informal service
- ✓ Free Life Insurance on your savings and to pay off any loans
- ✓ Opportunities for meaningful and interesting volunteering
- ✓ School savings clubs

### Opening times

10am to 2.30pm	Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays
10am to 6pm	Thursdays
Wednesdays	Closed

Why not drop in for a chat at our office and discover the benefits of being a Credit Union Member?



Thanks to The Moray Council, Forres Area Credit Union has had a base in Forres House Community Centre ever since it was founded, over 11 years ago. The recent move to the High Street has already proved worthwhile, with over 40 new members joining.

The hard work and careful housekeeping of many Forres volunteers over the 11 years cannot be praised too highly. Due to their efforts, the Credit Union became financially sound enough to buy 138 High Street.

Last year, as a project to celebrate 10 years of successful operating, the Credit Union decided to develop Savings Clubs in local schools. It is vital that young people begin as early as possible to learn how to save and take charge of their own money, no matter how small the amounts. At present, no other organisation offers this service. Head Teachers have been very supportive. The scheme has attracted over 300 Junior Members so far and there is room for many more!

**Not for Profit, Not for Charity But for Service**

