

VOICE

The Tenants'

Summer 2009

Housing Inspection Report – Council sets out plan for improvement

On 7 January, the Scottish Housing Regulator published its report on Moray Council's housing services. In the report the regulator praised the Council for the way it delivers services and manages the housing stock. While also praising the way the Housing Services tackles homelessness, the report identified some areas for improvement in homelessness services.

The Council scored an 'excellent' rating for its housing management, 'good' in asset management and 'fair' for services to homeless people. These results place the Council in the top four performing councils inspected.

The most important aspect of inspection is about how we use the findings to improve our services to tenants.

The Council has now produced an Improvement Plan setting out a range of actions across the three inspected areas that will address the key recommendations contained in the Regulator's report. These include gathering more feedback from tenants on what they think of our services, increasing the availability of temporary accommodation for homeless people, and reducing our reliance on B&B accommodation. As part of the plan, we also intend to deliver improvements

in our anti-social behaviour management arrangements and in our performance in collecting former tenants arrears. We plan to review our repairs appointment system to offer a wider range of appointments. And we will also be seeking to improve our Right to Repair arrangements.

The Improvement Plan was agreed by the Regulator in April 2009. After two years, the Regulator will ask for a report on progress with the improvement plan and will indicate at that time whether or not progress has been satisfactory.

Progress in implementing the plan will be reported in future editions of Tenants Voice.

Full details of the Improvement Plan are available on the Council's website:
www.moray.gov.uk

The full report can be found on the Scottish Housing Regulator's website
www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk

If you have any comments on the Improvement Plan or wish further information, please Graeme Davidson
(01343) 563506
graeme.davidson@moray.gov.uk

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Your local area housing office



BUCKIE

01542 837200

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

ELGIN

01343 563429

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

E-mail:
housing.reception@moray.gov.uk

FORRES

01309 694000

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

E-mail: forresaccess@moray.gov.uk

KEITH

01542 885500

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



HAPPY TO TRANSLATE

emergency out of hours: 08457 56 56 56

Dear Tenant,



Welcome to the summer edition of the Tenants' Voice.

Since I last wrote, the Scottish Housing Regulator has praised our Housing Service for the quality of the services it provides to tenants. In its report published in January, the regulator said that our housing management services were excellent and our property management/repairs services were good.

This very positive report reflects the commitment by our staff over a number of years to providing a high quality service. The regulator found many strengths in our services for homeless people, but also identified some areas where we could improve. We are determined to meet the challenges we face in relation to improving our homelessness services, a key one of which will be to increase the supply of temporary accommodation in Moray.

Another good news story for Moray has been the Scottish Government's approval of our bid for funding to build 40 new Council houses in Elgin. We are currently experiencing a severe shortage of affordable housing with many households in Moray unable to secure a good quality home they can afford. The new Council houses will provide a badly needed addition to the affordable rented stock in Moray.

I welcome the Scottish Government's approval of the Council's application for "pressured area" status in Forres. This move will help protect the remaining affordable stock in Moray at a time when waiting lists are longer than ever and tackling homelessness is a key priority for the Council.

Preparations for the 2009 Tenants' Conference in September are already underway. This has become a key event in the local housing calendar. I am sure this year's event will be as interesting, informative and entertaining as last year's. I look forward to seeing you there.

Once again, I would remind you to visit the Tenants Core Group and tenant forum websites. These are invaluable sources of information about local housing issues and what is going on in your communities.

I hope you find this edition of the Tenants' Voice both enjoyable and informative.

Councillor Eric McGillivray

Moray Tenants' Conference 2009

This year's Tenants' Conference is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 17th September in Elgin Town Hall. Following on from the success of previous years, the organisers are hoping to make this event their best yet with a new and dramatic approach to some of the workshop presentations.

As per previous years, there will be workshops for delegates to attend on a range of topics from Healthy Eating to Being a Good Neighbour. An open session is also planned giving delegates the opportunity to ask any questions they may have. Refreshments and a buffet lunch will be available and the day will end with a prize draw. For further information or to book places at this year's conference, please complete the form attached or contact Steven Christie on Elgin (01343) 540524 or E-mail stevenchristie672@btinternet.com your comments on this.



I would like to attend the Moray Tenants' Conference 2009 on Thursday 17th September 2009.

Name:

Address:

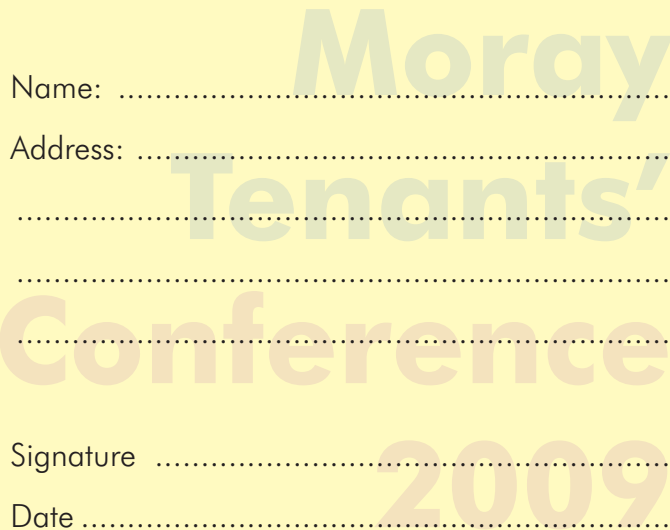
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Signature

Date



Anti Social Behaviour Case

The Council, through its Neighbour Dispute Policy, manages a wide range of different neighbour disputes. The aim is to enable people to have the quiet enjoyment of their homes. To achieve this we use a range of different methods. The example set out below shows some of the processes, staff and agencies involved in helping us to achieve this.

Mr Brown is an owner who lives in a one bedroom, four in a block flat, below his neighbour Mr Black, a Council tenant.

Mr Brown has complained in the past of disturbance coming from Mr Black's flat early in the morning and late at night. He states he works shifts and has to get his sleep. He states he has spoken to Mr Black and things improved for a little while, but Mr Black reverted to waking him up at night and early in the morning.

Mr Brown did not initially keep a diary of these incidences. He then contacted the Area Housing Officer who recorded this as a neighbour dispute and explained what would happen next.

A letter was sent to Mr Black to say that the Council had received a complaint and set out the time scale for the investigation. Mr Brown was advised that the dispute was given a category C rating, a dispute between two neighbours, and would be investigated within 10 working days. Likewise Mr Brown received a letter to acknowledge his complaint, along with diary sheets to note any further incidences.

Mr Black was contacted and stated the flat he lives in has very poor sound insulation and that Mr Brown had started complaining unreasonably about the slightest noise. He stated that he and Mr Brown had initially got along very well but fell out after Mr Brown was abusive to one of his friends after leaving his home one night at 10.30 pm. He states that Mr Brown's shift pattern means he goes to bed very early. He states he has tried to moderate his behaviour by making sure any visitors don't stay late and keeping down the noise of his television. Each time he has done so Mr Brown complains about something else. He states he has stopped having friends round because he is fed up with Mr Brown complaining.

During the Area Housing Officers investigations they

established that no other neighbours were complaining and that on some occasions Mr Brown had complained to the Police and was not present when they called to investigate. The Police subsequently advised Mr Brown about this and decided to take no further action in respect of his complaints.

After investigations, the Area Housing Officer wrote to Mr Brown advising that the Council had no evidence to uphold his complaint. The case was monitored for 28 days. During this period Mr Brown and his neighbour continued to make unsubstantiated complaints against each other. After discussing the case with the Area Housing Manager, the Area Housing Officer contacted both parties and agreed a referral to the Moray Community Mediation Service.

The Moray Community Mediation service enables neighbour complaints to be resolved by using trained mediators to reach agreements with people in dispute. The service is funded by Moray Council and takes around 22 referrals each year from disputes involving Council tenants. The service is delivered by an independent organisation termed SACRO, which employs trained mediators. Upon referral they contact each of the parties and seek to find a solution and agreement to the dispute. Mediation seeks forward-looking solutions and encourages people to take responsibility for their actions. The service is impartial and confidential. Over 90% of cases referred to Mediation results in agreement.

After the referral and visit by the Mediators there has been no further complaints.

The case has now been closed.

ANTI
SOCIAL
BEHAVIOUR

Moray Tenants' Core Group

The Moray Tenants' Core Group is made up of representatives from each of the local Tenant Forums throughout Moray. The Group which was formed in the 90's was the original meeting point for Tenants to discuss issues which affected them prior to the formation of local groups.

The Core group meets on a regular basis and brings together Tenants, Housing Management and Moray Councillors to discuss housing issues. The discussions can be lively with a number of tenant issues being brought to the table. These can vary from dog fouling to housing upgrades and rent setting. The Core group also has representatives on other groups within the Council ensuring that the voice of Moray's Tenants is heard. These include the Tenant Participation working group, the Housing Best Value group and the Housing Sub-Committee which is unique to Moray. Tenants on the sub-committee have the opportunity to work with the councillors and discuss, debate and implement changes to the Housing services provided by the Moray Council.

The Core group is also responsible for the annual Tenants' Conference which is held in September each year. The group raise the money to finance the conference from external sources, which means the conference is free to all Moray Council Tenants, a fact of which the group is proud. Application forms for this year's event can be found on page 2. As well as organising our own conference, some of the Core Group members also attend other conferences and events throughout Scotland, taking with and bringing back a wealth of experience.

Out with Moray, the group has representatives on larger Regional and National groups, these include The Northern Lights Regional Network, Scottish Housing Best Value Network, The Scottish Housing Regulator, The Tenants Regulation Advisory Group (TRAG), Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) which has recently taken over Tenant Involvement Grampian Highland and Rural Areas (TIGHRA). Representation on these groups ensures that Moray Tenants are heard nationally as well as locally. It also increases our voice when consulting with the Housing Minister Etc.

Why Do I Need Insurance?



The Moray Council does not insure your furniture, belongings or decorations.

You need to take out your own household insurance either under a special scheme arranged by Aviva, or by making your own arrangements.

The Aviva scheme is open to all Moray Council tenants who have Scottish Secure or Short Scottish Secure tenancies. When you take out this insurance, it will cover most of your household goods and contents, including your furniture, TV, clothing, carpets and electrical goods. It also covers theft of your keys and the contents of your freezer. These items will be insured against the risks of fire, theft, vandalism and water damage caused, for example, by burst pipes. Accidental damage is covered only on a limited basis.

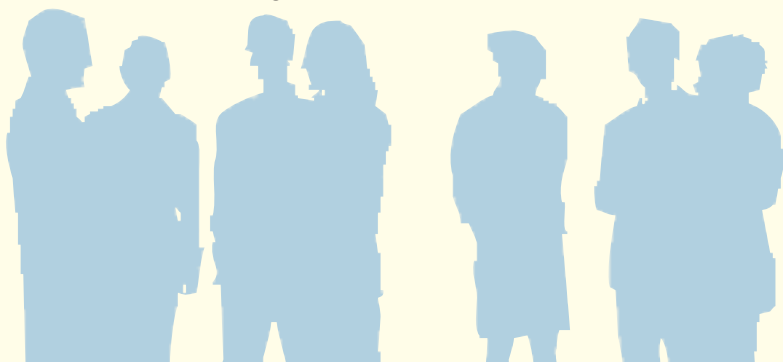
Your home contents are covered on a "new for old" basis with the exception of linen and clothing which will be replaced at their current cost, less an amount for wear and tear.

The cost of the insurance depends on the value of the items you insure. The lowest amount that can be insured is £6,000 if you are over 60 and £9,000 for all other tenants. The highest amount is £25,000. Quotes are subject to your application being accepted.

A booklet on the scheme is available at your Local Housing Office. To apply for cover you must complete the form attached to the booklet.

For further details please contact Housing Services on 01343 563429

Details of the scheme are also available on the Council's Website.



Why We Gather Information About Our Tenants

The Moray Council gathers a lot of information about its tenants. We often ask you to complete forms and questionnaires that provide information about yourself, about your housing needs and aspirations and about what you think of our housing services. But why do we need this information? What do we do with it? Who sees it?

The Council wants tenants to have the best in housing services. We want to adapt our services to meet tenants' needs and plan ahead to provide even better services in the future. To make sure we can do this, we want to give you the opportunity to tell us about yourself and your households' needs.

Why do we need this information?

All tenants are different and we want to make sure everyone gets the same high standard of service you have come to expect from us. To do this, we need to build a full picture of the people who live in our homes. If we know how old you are, if you have children, if you have any disabilities, or cultural or religious needs that we should take into account, we can give you that high standard of service.

Understanding your needs

Many tenants have specific needs that it would be useful for us to know about. For example, it may take you a while to answer the door due to a mobility difficulty, or you may want a family member to be present when a member of staff visits.

Improving access to our services

Not everyone finds it easy to contact us because of disabilities or language barriers. If we know how you want us to provide our services, and which formats and languages you need, it will be easier for us to keep in touch with you.

Planning for the future

We want to carry on improving our services for many years to come. Having an accurate picture of tenants now helps us plan ahead for new and improved services.

Frequently asked questions

Q I've given you this information before, why do I need to give it to you again?

By law we have to make sure that details we hold about you are correct and up to date. If you fill out the forms that we send you, we can update our records with any changes or new information.

Q What will you do with my information?

We will keep your details on our computer database and use them to make sure we manage your tenancy in the way that suits you best. The information that you give us will remain confidential.

We will analyse the information to produce general statistics. This may show, for example, that tenants living in a certain area have a specific requirement, so we will take this into account when providing services. However, we will also have information about your household so we can look at how we can meet your individual needs. For example, we would provide you with large print documents or make sure a family member is present when we visit you, if that is what you want.

Q Who will see my details?

The only people who will see your details are Housing Service staff. We may pass some details on to contractors who carry out work or repairs on our behalf, however we would only do this with your permission and where those details can help them carry out the work quickly and with minimal disruption to you.

What if I don't want to answer some of the questions? You don't have to answer any of the questions if you don't want to, but the more answers we get, the better the service we can give you.

Q What if I need help to fill out the form?

If you need help filling out the form because of difficulties with reading or writing, impaired vision, or you would prefer to use a language other than English, please contact your local Area Housing Office.

Summer Security Tips



Securing your home needn't cost the earth, or turn it into an unattractive fortress. There are lots of simple measures you can take to ensure your home is safer and that both the opportunist and determined thief will look elsewhere.

Accessible windows and external doors at the rear of houses that are out of sight of neighbours or the general public are especially vulnerable. Ground floor windows and windows accessible from balconies, walkways and adjacent roofs are clearly more at risk than upper level windows that are out of normal reach.

Remember, someone attempting to break into a house tries to do so quickly and with the minimum of noise.

Keep your doors and windows locked at all times, even when you are in the house. This will prevent an opportunist thief from sneaking into your home. Houses that appear empty are more at risk than houses that appear to be occupied. If you are leaving your home unattended for any length of time, use timer switches to switch on internal lights automatically, to make it look as if there is someone at home. Remember to cancel all deliveries and if possible, have a trusted neighbour collect mail daily to prevent it piling up behind the door.

As additional security measures, you may wish to fit intruder alarm systems or exterior lighting which activates when movement is detected. Prior to fitting these features you should contact your Area Housing Office to ask if permission is required.

Sheds should be fitted with a good quality hasp and lock and non-returnable screws or

coach bolts to the hinges.

Or why not consider joining or setting up a Neighbourhood Watch scheme. This is a partnership where people and organisations, including the police, come together to make their communities safer. It aims to help people protect themselves and their properties and to reduce the fear of crime by means of improved home security, greater vigilance, accurate reporting of suspicious incidents to the police and by fostering a community spirit.

Remember, you must NEVER challenge someone behaving suspiciously or put yourself at risk. If you see something that concerns you, contact Grampian Police on 0845 600 5 700 or, in an emergency, dial 999.

Alternatively, the registered charity Crimestoppers can be contacted on 0800 555 111. Crimestoppers are independent of the police and government. Callers don't have to give their name or any personal information and calls cannot be traced.

If you require help or information regarding anything mentioned in this article, **contact your local Crime Reduction Officer, PC Ray Walker, on 01224 307110 or call in at Elgin Police Station.**

Local Holidays 2009

Aberlour Craigellachie Knockando Tomintoul	April 6	June 1	July 27	September 21	
Buckie	April 6	June 8	July 27	September 14	October 19
Cullen	April 6	June 8	July 27	September 14	October 19
Dufftown	April 6	June 8	August 3	September 21	
Elgin	April 13	June 22	September 7	October 19	
Lhanbryde	April 13	June 22	September 7	October 19	
Findochty	April 6	June 8	July 27	September 14	October 19
Fochabers Garmouth Kingston Mosstodloch Spey Bay Urquhart	April 13	June 22	September 7	October 19	
Portknockie	April 6	June 8	July 27	September 14	October 19
Burghead Hopeman Lossiemouth	April 6	June 1	August 10	September 21	
Forres	April 20	June 1	July 27	September 21	October 19
Roths	April 6	June 1	July 27	September 21	

Win Win Win £50

This edition of the Tenants' Voice has the chance for you to win £50 in High Street vouchers!

Simply complete the word search to find the answer to the cryptic clue.

Send in your answer by 30 July 2009 using the slip below.

Instructions:

1. Answer the questions below.
2. Find the answer to these questions hidden in the word search.
3. Take the letters from the question marks; arrange them to find the answer to the following cryptic clue:

**"A beautiful scenic loch"
in the highlands.**

1. A fudgy northern isle.
2. Is this see through city on the move?
3. This town may be part of a candle.
4. This island could be up in the air.
5. You may find a "not so round wheel" here.
6. Is this isle full of "squeaky wheels"?
7. Birds of prey may play golf here.
8. "Yankee money"
9. Barrel makers may live here.
10. The "Moray Broch".
11. Are all the fish from here smokers?
12. A "Silver City"
13. One of our many Scottish cities to "discover".
14. Chop up veggies into cubes.
15. Keep going to the bottom.
16. Princes come to shop in this city's main street.
17. The Highland capital.
18. A "Tweedy Isle".
19. With jam and cream.
20. Larger
21. A right royal gathering place.
22. Could this be the shortest place in Scotland?
23. Is one of our local villages going to the wall?
24. This town may close at mid-day.
25. I hope farmer Giles doesn't spread to much manure on this isle.

?	A	E	H	G	R	U	B	I	E	X	D	Y	C	E
Y	N	Y	N	R	L	B	I	C	E	C	O	A	Y	D
Q	T	B	I	N	A	S	S	E	?	R	E	V	N	?
H	C	C	W	R	C	O	P	B	U	V	Y	M	T	N
A	R	B	?	O	A	T	H	V	D	?	U	N	E	?
R	S	A	B	R	G	R	A	M	E	A	R	B	V	U
R	E	Z	A	K	O	S	C	J	D	O	L	L	A	R
I	?	R	G	N	B	F	A	L	K	I	R	K	F	G
S	G	A	N	E	H	N	M	L	O	E	C	G	A	?
N	A	G	I	Y	C	V	T	Y	G	R	N	V	D	E
A	E	G	L	R	S	Y	K	C	O	A	Z	O	T	Y
C	N	I	R	Y	N	?	D	K	U	P	E	U	C	K
Z	E	B	I	F	I	P	I	C	M	U	Z	K	Q	S
Y	L	T	T	W	I	Y	C	U	X	C	A	S	Y	H
M	G	E	S	T	A	Q	M	M	N	?	O	N	U	D

1. Answer the questions. 2. Find them on the word search. 3. Take the letters from the question marks; arrange them to find "A beautiful scenic loch" in The Highlands.

Tenants' Voice Quiz Entry Form

Name:

Address:

.....

.....

.....

Telephone Number:

Email Address

The answer to the cryptic clue "A beautiful scenic loch' in the highlands' is:

.....

Please return entry forms to: The Tenants' Voice Quiz, Housing Planning & Development, The Moray Council Headquarters, Elgin IV31 1BX or drop it into your local area housing office. Entries received after 30 July 2009 will not be entered into the prize draw.

Craft Apprenticeships

Some of the current apprentices employed by Building Services



Building Services DLO is the Council's 'in house' Contractor that delivers the majority of Repairs and Maintenance works to your home.

As a result of the success of the Maintenance Partnership between Housing, Building Services and our Property Services Departments, the Council recently agreed a 5-year extension to the Maintenance Partnership.

This has secured the workload for the foreseeable future for Building Services, which currently employ 120 staff, 16 of which are currently serving Craft Apprenticeships.

In order to maintain the high levels of service that Building Services provide, opportunities are currently available for a further 3 Craft Apprentices to join the team at Mosstodloch.

Vacancies exist for an Apprentice Joiner, Plumber and Electrician, with applications required no later than 24 July 2009.

For further information please contact:

Building Services DLO, Tel: 01343 829000

Or write to us with a CV at:
The General Manager
Building Services DLO
1 Mosstodloch Industrial Estate
Mosstodloch
FOCHABERS
IV32 7LH

Or by e-mail at: mike.rollo@moray.gov.uk

Tenants' Handbook

Following consultation with tenants, tenant groups, staff and other professional bodies, we have now completed our review of the Tenants' Handbook. You will have a copy of the Tenants' Handbook, which we published in 2004. The Handbook gives you information you need on the housing services we offer you. It includes

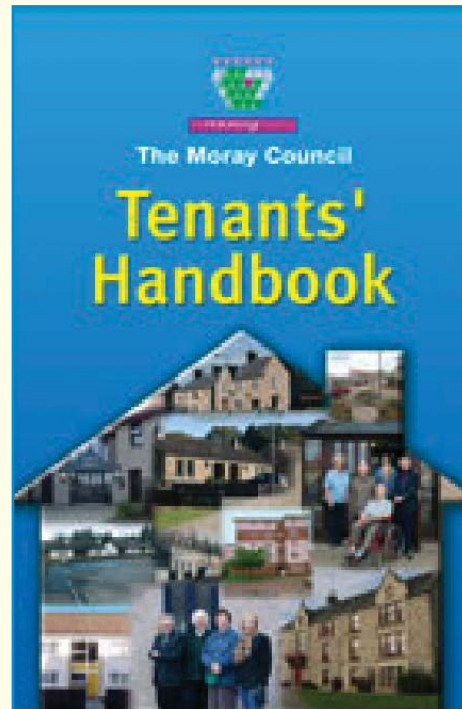
information on the terms of your tenancy, rent and service charges, policy on housing allocations, repairs and maintenance, your Right to Buy, and tenant participation.

The new version of the Handbook updates this information in the light of changes in housing legislation and to our policies and procedures. New sections have been added on access to information, Equalities, Estate Management, Health, Safety and Security in your home, and our Housing Improvement Programme.

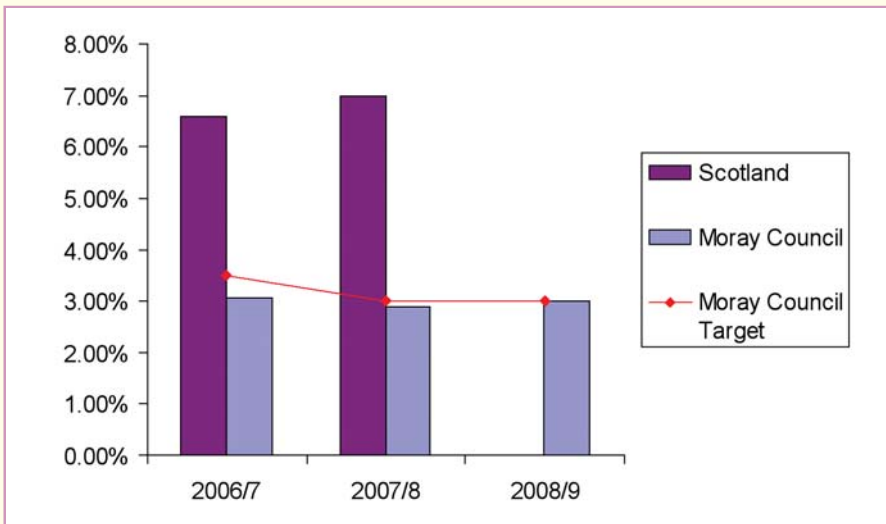
As well as the content of the Tenants' Handbook, we are also seeking to improve its format. The new version will now be issued as a DVD that you can access using a DVD player or PC. This format is less bulky than the paper version making storage easier. You may, of course, prefer your Handbook in paper format and this will continue to be available on request. For tenants with particular needs, large print and audiotape versions will be provided. The Tenants' Handbook continues to be included in the Council's "Happy to Translate" scheme. For those with internet access, the Handbook can be downloaded from the Council's website.

We plan to release the new version of the Tenants' Handbook in September 2009. All tenants will receive a Handbook. For further information, please contact:

Graeme Davidson
01343 563506
graeme.davidson@moray.gov.uk



Housing Performance and Service Standards



Rent Arrears

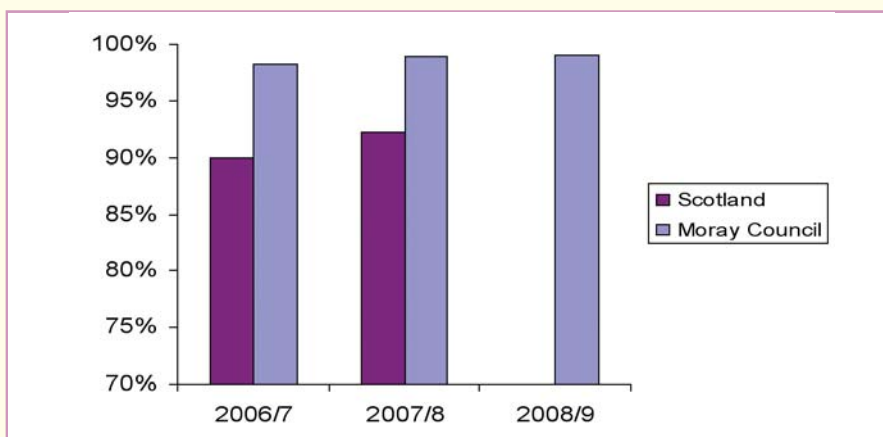
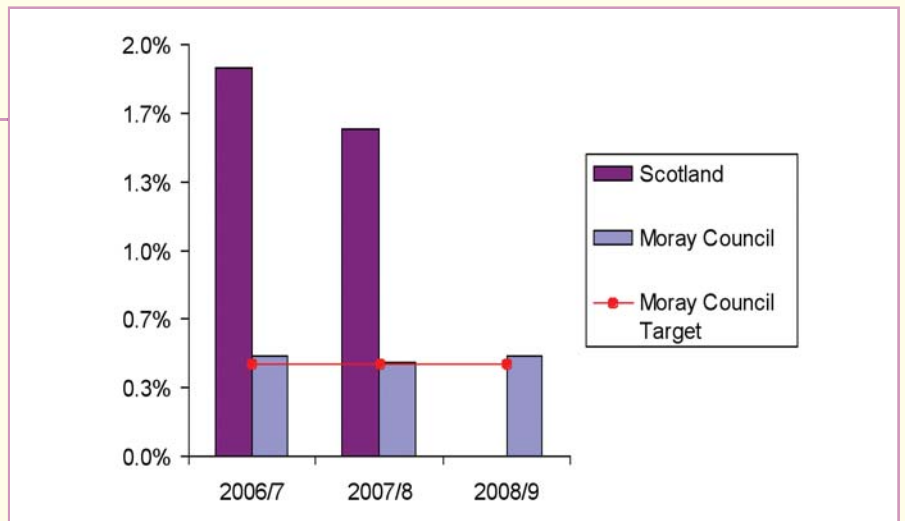
We set a target level of rent arrears to be achieved each year. We report our performance against this target.

In 2008/9 we achieved our arrears target of 3% of net rent receivable. We continue to be one of the top performers in Scotland at keeping rent arrears to a minimum. Two tenants were evicted for rent arrears.

Empty Property Management

We aim to turn around empty properties as quickly as possible to minimise rent loss and maximise the amount of money available to pay for maintenance and improvements to other properties.

Less than 0.6% of rental income was lost due to properties being empty during 2008/9. Although we saw a slight decrease in performance this year, we still exceed the Scottish average.



Repairs

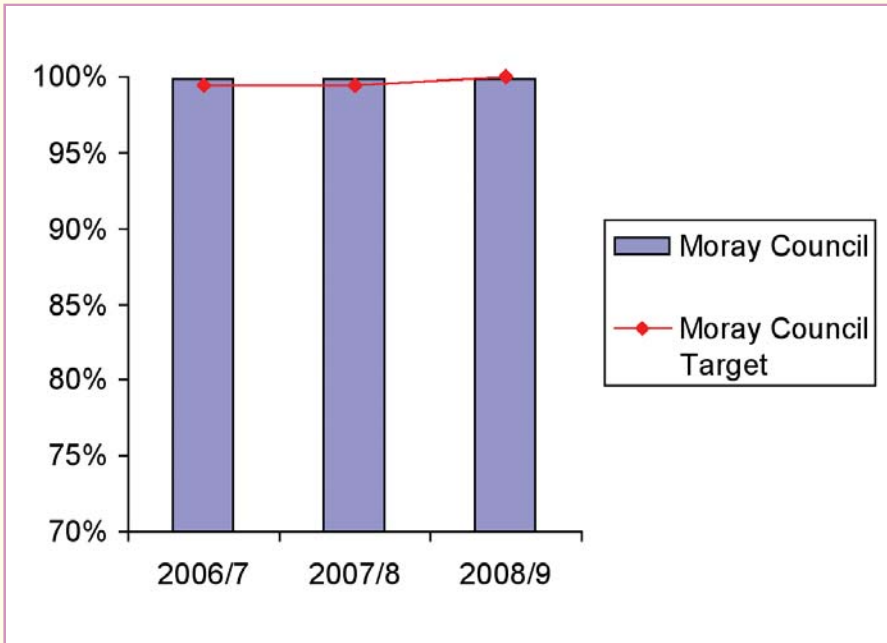
We set and publish targets each year for carrying out repairs within timescales.

During 2008/09, we completed over 20,000 repairs and 99% of those were completed within target response times.

Gas Safety

We have valid safety certificates for 100% of properties with gas installations.

During 2008/09, 99.9% of properties held a valid gas safety certificate.



Anti Social Behaviour

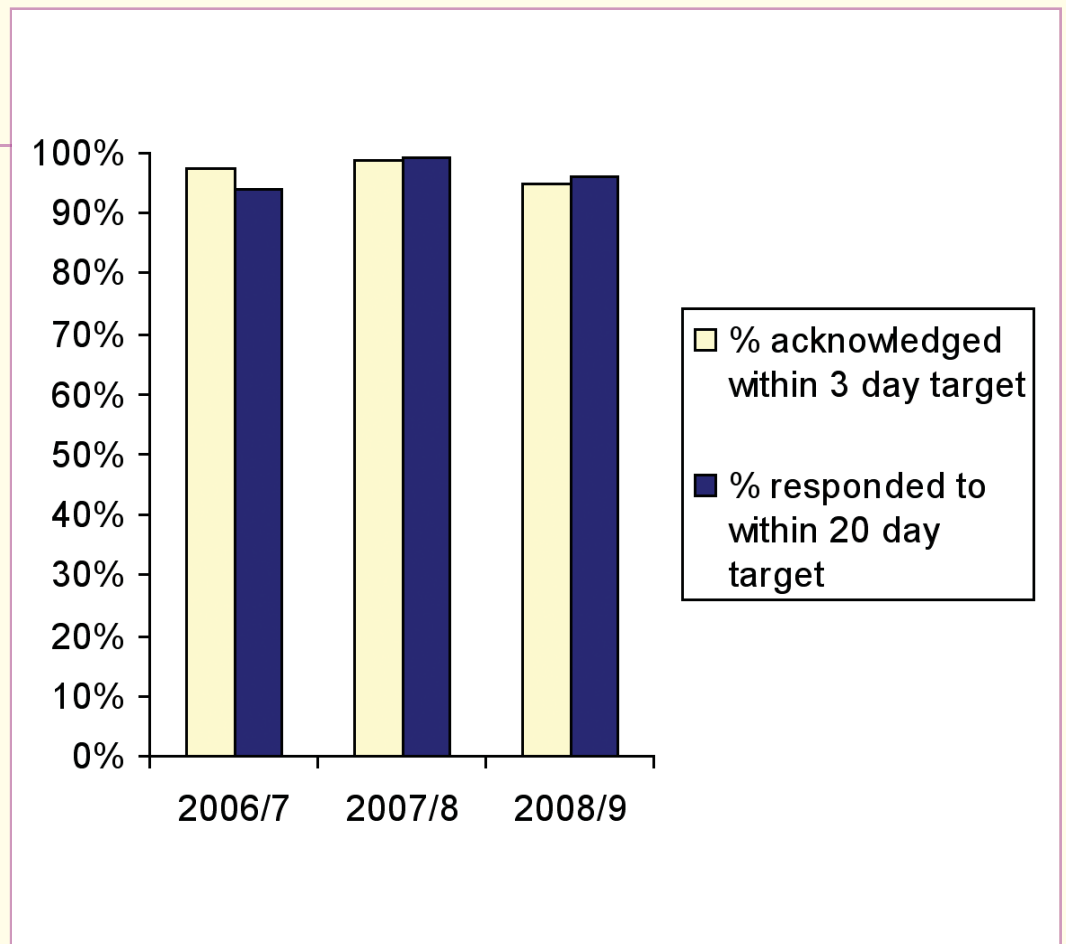
We monitor the extent to which intervention in neighbour disputes etc complaints effects improvement.

During 2008/09, over 80% of interventions resulted in an improvement in the situation. In 2008/09, we evicted 2 tenants as a result of anti social behaviour.

Handling Complaints

We aim to respond to complaints within target.

Although we saw a slight dip in performance during 2008/09, we acknowledged over 94% of complaints within target and responded to over 96% within target.



Interview with Jill Stewart, Chief Housing Officer, Moray Council



1. How long have you been involved in housing?

I joined Scottish Special Housing Association as a Graduate Trainee in August 1976, so I am coming up to almost 33 years in housing in some form or another. Before I joined SSHA in 1976, I had worked in the summer of 1975 with the Cyrenians in Aberdeen in the night shelter building at the back of the old Model Lodging House so maybe that is where my interest in housing began.

2. Prior to joining the Moray Council, where were you employed and what was your role?

I worked in Highland Council as the Head of Housing Strategy from local government re-organisation in 1996. That role was primarily on the strategic and policy side of housing, but I was also involved in housing development, private sector grants and housing budget preparation. It was a wide and varied job, particularly as the Highland Council was a new body created from the former Regional Council and eight District Councils. As a result, there were often eight different policies in operation for any housing activity that you could name and therefore the process of developing a single Highland policy across a wide range of service provision was a major area of work in the early years of that Council.

3. Thinking about the Housing Service when you first arrived, what has changed?

I came to Moray Council in October 2000 and I think there have been a number of changes since then, some as the result of changes in legislation and also the increased profile of Local Authorities as the strategic lead in housing. But I also think there have been changes in that we more clearly set out what our policies are and we do much more to find out what our

customers think of the service they receive. As a Housing Service, I think we are much more integrated than we were in 2000, and the communication across the service is much enhanced from what it was.

Having said all that, we can always make further improvements, I think as a Service, we have the willingness and commitment to do so.

4. What are your views on Tenant Participation?

I have always been a supporter of tenant participation, which is probably not surprising given that I worked for a Tenant Management Co-operative in the early 1980's. Basically, I believe that tenants have a right to expect a quality service and to have a say in decisions that affect them. The Council has had tenant representatives on its Committee dealing with housing matters since before I came to Moray, but I think the Housing Sub Committee now provides a real opportunity for tenant representatives to raise issues that are of concern to them and then debate these with the Council's elected members.

There are issues for both tenant groups and the Council in encouraging greater tenant participation, that is a similar picture to elsewhere. While we may think that this means that everyone is happy, we need to guard against assuming this is the case.

5. The Housing Services were inspected last year, what are your thoughts about the results?

Overall, I thought the results were extremely satisfactory, and are a reflection of the commitment that the Council and the Housing staff give to the provision of a quality housing service. The grading for Housing Management and Asset Management were both extremely satisfactory with very few issues to be addressed.

This was our first housing inspection and I think we put in a great deal of effort to the process. Overall, I don't think there were any findings which came as a surprise to us. We were aware that we had more challenges in homelessness, largely as a result of the housing pressure that we are experiencing in Moray, but it was also pleasing to see in the Inspection report that many of our approaches on homelessness met with approval from the Regulator.

6. Following the inspection what would you say are the key areas for improvement?

The major area for improvement action is on homelessness and particularly in our supply of and

management of temporary accommodation. We have agreed an Improvement Plan with the Scottish Housing Regulator and will be working over the next two years to implement that Plan. As a first step in this, the Council has agreed a Temporary Accommodation Strategy through which we will seek to expand the supply of temporary accommodation and reduce our reliance on bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless households.

We have identified some other areas for improvement, as an example, I think we can further develop the way that we seek and then use customer feedback. Again, we will work to implement these improvements over the next two years.

7. The Moray Council recently received £1million towards building new houses, you had hoped for £2million will this make any difference to your plans?

What this means is that we can progress with Phase 1 which will deliver 40 new Council houses in Elgin. These will be the first mainstream Council houses built in Moray for almost twenty years. Our initial plans were for a further 40 to be built as Phase 2. We're not yet clear how Scottish Government funding for the future will be allocated so at the moment it is difficult to say whether it will mean that the Council's plans change. Unfortunately, the level of Scottish Government funding available for Council new build is currently limited to a maximum of £25,000 per house, which means that the Council has to fund the remainder. Due to this, the Council's plans were limited to 80 houses, as we simply cannot afford to add to our existing debt but, I think we need many more than that if we are to meet housing needs in Moray.

8. What do you think about the future of social housing in Scotland?

I think the pressure on the social housing sector will continue, certainly in Moray, we see no evidence of this diminishing, with fewer relets every year. It will be interesting to see how the discussion on the Draft Housing Bill develops over the coming months.

9. Out with your position at Moray Council, what would your ideal job be?

Is this the bit where I say this is my ideal job? There have been times over the past 33 years when I might have been attracted to consultancy or academic work, but I would miss the satisfaction of being involved in the delivery side of housing and in playing a part in making changes happen. So I don't have an 'ideal job' that is much different to what I am currently doing, unless I could be Minister for Housing, that is!!

10. If you could live anywhere in the world where would be your dream location?

Difficult one! There are definitely times when I would like to live in a warmer climate. I love Italy but I also like France and parts of the Far East, so I find it hard to settle on one location. I've lived in villages in the north of Scotland since 1987 so I can't see myself in a city environment, maybe somewhere like Moray but warmer would suffice.

11. If you won the lottery would you quit your job?

I only buy a lottery ticket occasionally – and have never bought a Euromillions ticket, so I suspect that this question is a bit academic! My current ambition is simply to win £10, but if I did win that, I wouldn't quit my job.

Tenants Voice Showers

In the last edition of the Tenants' Voice, we sought your views on the fitting of showers in your homes. Tenants who do not currently have showers were asked to respond to two questions:

Would you be interested in having a shower fitted?
Would you be willing to pay additional rent to pay for the installation?

Although the response rate was very low, the vast majority of those tenants who responded indicated that they would be interested in having a shower fitted and would also be willing to pay additional rent to meet the cost.

In March of this year, the Housing Sub-Committee agreed that from 2010 tenants receiving new kitchens as part of the kitchen replacement programme will be

offered the choice of having showers fitted at the same time. The cost to tenants would be an extra £2.00 per week on their rent for a period of 15 years in line with lifecycle periods listed under the current 'right to compensation' legislation.

From 2010/11, the Council will also provide showers to tenants who are not having kitchens fitted but still want a shower. However, depending on the level of demand, the Council may not be able to provide a shower to every tenant who asks for one and this means requests would need to be prioritised in some way.

Further information on how we intend to prioritise requests and on progress with the shower installation scheme will be available through the Tenants' Voice.

Recycling in Moray

It has been several years now since kerbside recycling was first introduced to the residents of Moray. In that time we have been able to offer a collection service, with the provision of the blue and orange boxes, to a high percentage of households across the county and consequently our recycling rates have continued to rise. We are now consistently recycling over 40% of our household waste each month and the residents of Moray can take pride in their efforts, which have made this achievement possible.

Those areas that we are unable to service with the blue and orange boxes; such as flats and rural properties, have access to local recycling points where bins are provided for the collection of paper and cardboard, glass and cans. Currently we have over seventy local recycling points helping everyone to recycle as much as possible.

One fairly recent provision has been the introduction of the purple skips at our four main recycling centres at Elgin, Forres, Buckie and Keith for the deposit of plastic bottles. The people of Moray have been keen to expand on the materials that they can recycle and see plastics as being one of the largest items that they now throw away. Unfortunately there is no reprocessing plant in Scotland for the recycling of plastics and most of the plastic collected in the UK will be taken abroad where it will be recycled into clothing, garden furniture, crash barriers and toys. Each type of plastic, there are up to twelve different ones, need to be reprocessed separately making the collection and subsequent disposal difficult. We have been fortunate that the company Securecycle, who reprocess our paper and card have been willing to also collect the plastic bottles that we collect. They are, however, only able to take the ones with the symbols:  and  usually found near or at the bottom of the bottle. These will be the majority of the plastic milk cartons, fizzy drinks and juice bottles that people buy and also many of the household cleaning ones that are used in the home. We are unable to offer a kerbside collection service for plastic at this time, as this would mean another storage container at each property and an increase in the number of vehicles and manpower needed to collect



the items. The resulting costs cannot be justified when taking into account the environmental impact of transporting plastics long distances.

The Scottish Government has set new targets for the future, asking everyone to cut back on the rubbish they produce and requiring each council to increase their recycling rates. By the year 2025 each council will have to recycle 70% of the waste it collects and with landfill tax currently at all time high of £40 a ton (and set to rise over the next few years) there is an urgency to increase our recycling by as much as we can.

The Waste and Recycling Team, based at Ashgrove Depot, are keen to help Moray residents with these recycling targets and are happy to come along and talk to individuals and groups about any concerns or requirements that they may have. There is a need for us all to look more closely at what we are putting into the green bin and asking 'can it be recycled?'

One of the easiest items to consider are the clothes that we throw away; charity shops are keen to accept donations of many household items and clothes especially, sell well in their shops. If your tops and trousers have seen better days you can take them along to one of the many textile banks that are located at the recycling centres, points and supermarket car parks. Any items too worn out to be resold can be recycled into rags for industry and garages, so nothing goes to waste!

For more information contact the Hotline on 01343 557045 or check on the Moray Council website.



Tenants Survey Improvement Plan

We told you in the last edition of the Tenants' Voice that we would keep you fully informed of progress with the Tenants Survey Improvement Plan. You will remember that a plan was drawn up in response to what you told us in the Tenants Survey about what you think of our service. Improvements we have already reported include giving you more information about our Capital Improvement Programme and about what your Estate Caretakers do.

Further improvements we intend to deliver include the production of local newsletters for your areas and the holding of roadshow events when improvement works are being carried out in an area. Another key action in 2009 will be improving the way we gather information to measure your satisfaction with our service and, more importantly, how we use this information to deliver improvement. One area we will be considering is the use of telephone surveys to measure tenant satisfaction with a service we have provided. Finally, we will continue to inform you about energy efficiency in your home and ways you can save money on heating costs.

If you want to know more about the Tenants Survey Improvement Plan, please contact:

Graeme Davidson
01343 563506
graeme.davidson@moray.gov.uk

Pressured Area Status for Forres



The Scottish Government granted 'pressured area status' for Council houses in Forres on 17 February 2009. Council houses in Elgin, Lossiemouth and rural communities around Forres were granted pressured area status in March 2006. This helps us to protect the amount of affordable rented housing in high demand areas, to make sure that there are enough houses for people who need them.

We wrote to all Forres tenants in February to tell them about pressured area status.

If you live in one of these areas AND you became a tenant on or after 30 September 2002, your right to buy is temporarily suspended for 5 years. You will not lose out on building up time towards qualifying for right to buy and discount. This will continue during the temporary suspension.

If you signed your tenancy **before 30 September 2002, your rights stay the same** and you still have the right to buy.

If you want more information, contact your local area housing office.

Repair by Appointment



Did you know that Moray Council tenants can ask for their repairs to be completed on an appointment basis?

This allows you to arrange for the work to be completed during a morning or afternoon appointment, at a time and date to suit you.

Repairs that can be done under an appointment include things like faulty kitchen drawers and doors, broken locks, dripping taps, faulty sockets and lights etc.

Safety related repairs, which are deemed as emergencies, would still be done within a 2 hour timescale.

Everyone benefits from the 'Repairs by Appointment' system:

- We can plan with our DLO when the tradesmen will be in an area;
- The DLO do not waste time calling when no-one is at home;
- You will not have to phone back to ask when a repair will be done; and
- You will not have to spend time waiting around for the DLO to arrive

A repairs receipt will be posted out to you as a reminder of the date for the repair appointment.

When reporting a repair remember to ask for an appointment! – this not only helps the Moray Council to provide a better service to our tenants, but it also allows you to decide when you want the repair done.

Right To Repair

Under the Housing (Scotland) Act, Moray Council tenants have the right to certain small priority repairs carried out within given timescales.

The type of repairs which can be carried out under the scheme are listed below, and details of how the scheme operates can be found in Section 2 of your Tenant's Handbook, as well as the Right to Repair booklet that has been sent out to all tenants.

When requesting these repairs through your local housing office, you will be given details of the timescales involved, who will be carrying out the work, and information on what to do if the repair is not completed on time.

QUALIFYING REPAIRS	MAXIMUM TIME FOR COMPLETION OF THE REPAIR IN DAYS
Blocked flue to open fire or boiler.	1
Blocked or leaking foul drains, soil stacks or toilet pans where there is no other toilet in the house.	1
Blocked sink, bath or drain.	1
Electric power-loss of electric power.	1
Partial loss of electric power.	3
Insecure external window, door or lock.	1
Unsafe access path or step.	1
Significant leaks or flooding from water or heating pipes, tanks, cisterns.	1
Loss or partial loss of gas supply.	1
Loss or partial loss of space or water heating where no alternative heating is available.	1
Toilet not flushing where there is no other toilet in the house.	1
Unsafe power or lighting socket, or electrical fitting.	1
Water supply-loss of water supply.	1
Partial loss of water supply.	3
Loose or detached banister or hand rail.	3
Unsafe timber flooring or stair treads.	3
Mechanical extractor fan in internal kitchen or bathroom not working.	7

A repairs receipt will normally be posted out to you, or handed over if you are reporting the repair personally in the office, advising of the date for completion of the repair.

If our normal contractor fails to complete the repair within the required timescale, you can then contact an alternative contractor from a list supplied by the council, who will be instructed to complete the works if this is appropriate.

Our normal contractor is:

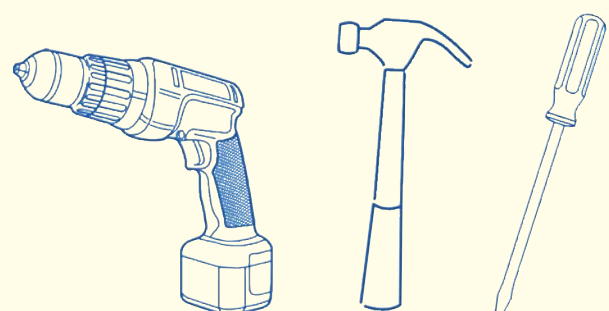
Moray Council DLO, Unit 6, Mosstodloch Industrial Estate, Fochabers
Telephone 01343 829000

An alternative contractor may only be approached to carry out the work should the DLO fail to attend by the final date for completion of the repair. The list of alternative contractors should not be used instead of phoning your local Area Housing Office

If our normal contractor fails to carry out the work, you may also be able to claim compensation.

The 'Right to Repair Booklet' gives information about the scheme, including the compensation amounts and list of alternative contractors for each Housing Area. Copies of this booklet have been posted out to all tenants, and an updated list of contractors has been sent out more recently.

The council has recently introduced changes to the repairs ordering system that we use, which will allow area office staff to improve the service delivered. This new system will help staff to identify the correct repair and also to decide whether that repair falls under the Right to Repair scheme. It is intended that this facility will also be available to tenants later this year through our council web-site, where tenants will be able to identify and order their own repairs through the internet. The council will also be issuing a Repairs Booklet to all tenants late this year, which will provide information on the type of repairs that can be ordered through this system.



Investment Strategy Update

During the current financial year, we will spend over £8.0m on the maintenance and modernisation of our properties, with several projects about to commence on site and the majority of works to be programmed and completed by the end of March 2010.

Expenditure for this year will cover, amongst other things:

- Capital Works - Kitchens; Heating; Replacement Doors; Adaptations
- Planned Maintenance – Estates Upgrades; Garage Upgrades, Roof/Fabric Repairs
- Cyclical Maintenance – Gas and Solid Fuel Servicing; Smoke Detectors; External Painterwork

Many projects within the Programme, particularly under Planned Maintenance and Cyclic Maintenance Budgets are being delivered through a Partnership Agreement with our own Building Services Direct Labour Organisation (DLO) and Property Services.

The main area of spend under our Capital Programme is our kitchen replacements. In financial year 2009/2010, around 400 kitchens will be replaced, at a cost of £1.9m. Also within the Capital Programme we have a budget of £0.6m for door and window replacements. This is allowing around 240 mainly flatted properties to be fitted with new common access doors and individual flat doors, and we have also made a start on replacing older windows in around 100 homes.

In order to improve energy efficiency and reduce tenants' fuel bills, we are also spending around £0.4m replacing older style heating systems with more efficient ones. Some properties will receive new gas heating systems this financial year, and we are also looking to install further energy efficient, renewable heating systems for some of our tenants who live off the gas main network. We will also be completing a range of major works under our Roof and Fabric Repairs budgets, prioritising areas such as re-rendering of properties, internal refurbishment, and replacement of rainwater goods in order to meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard. This work will total over £0.7m.

Our Cyclic Maintenance budget of just under £1.0m is mainly spent on the servicing of the Council's 4500 gas, coal and oil fired heating installations, as well as a regular six-yearly programmes of pre-painterwork repairs and external painterwork. The Council is also in the process of renewing a large number of our existing smoke detectors, and this work will be programmed to take place during the remaining months of the current financial year.

More details of the current programme can be found on the Council's website or by contacting your Area Housing Office or the Capital Programmes Team.

Works	Area Housing Team	Town
Heating Replacement	Buckie	Buckie
		Cullen
		Findochter
	Elgin	Portknockie
		Elgin
		Lossiemouth
		Forres
Keith	Aberlone	
	Dufftown	
	Keith	
Kitchen Replacement	Buckie	Buckie
		Cullen
		Fochabers
		Lintmill
		Mosstown
	Elgin	Elgin
		Lhanbry
		Lossiemouth
	Forres	Burghead
		Dyke
		Forres
	Keith	Aberlone
Dufftown		
Keith		
Window Replacement	Buckie	Buckie
		Cullen
		Findochter
	Elgin	Portknockie
		Lossiemouth
Keith	Dufftown	
	Newmill	
External Door Replacement	Elgin	Elgin
	Forres	Brodie Forres
GRAND TOTAL		

Moray Council Capital Programme 2009/10

	Street	No of Properties
	Milton Drive, Samson Avenue	2
	Logie Avenue	1
hty	Reidhaven Crescent	1
ockie	Mair Street, Reidhaven Street, Samson Street	9
	Anderson Drive, Deanshaugh Road ,Hazel Court, Main Street, North Port,	14
nouth	Moray Street	2
	Iowa Place	5
ur	Chapel Terrace, Sellar Place	3
wn	Maclennan Place	10
	Viewfield	1
	Alexander Street, Burns Square, Greenbank Court, Netherha Road, Wallace Avenue	71
	New View Court, Sea Street	17
pers	Christie Place	8
, Cullen	Tochieneal Corner	2
odloch	Birnie Place	25
	Ashburton Court, Bezack Street, Caroline Street, Chapel Court, Gisborne Court, Gordon Street, Harrison Terrace, King Street, Main Street, Manbeen Place, Manitoba Avenue, Mossend Place, Muirfield Crescent, Robertson Drive, Victoria Road	143
ryde	Garmouth Road, Glenesk Road	18
nouth	Boyd Anderson Drive, Castle Court, Rockall Place	46
ead	Mackenzie Place	4
	Russell Brae	2
	Bynack Place, Torridon Park	29
ur	Chapel Terrace	8
wn	Maclennan Place, Tomnamuidh Road	17
	Balloch Court	1
	Samson Avenue, William Street	17
	Logie Avenue, Logie Drive, Seafield Place, Victoria Place	27
hty	Cliff Street, Craigview, Hall Street, Reidhaven Crescent	18
ockie	Addison Street, Logie Drive, Slater Crescent	13
nouth	Boyd Anderson Drive, Community Way	36
wn	MacLennan Place, Tomnamuidh Road	12
ill	Isla Road	1
	Batchen Lane, Blantyre Place, Braco Place, Brodie Drive, Castlehill Street, Fulmar Road, Gordon Street, Kingmills, Ladyhill Wynd, Meadow Crescent, Mossend Place, Munro Place, Murdoch's Wynd, Robertson Drive, Weaver Place, Wellbrae Court	99
	Burnbank	1
	Brig Wynd, Caroline Street, Cumming Street, Fleurs Crescent, Fleurs Drive, Fleurs Place, Hainings North, Hainings South, Hainings West, High Street, Kingsway, St. Laurence Court, Strathcona Road, Tailwell, North Road	116

Energy Performance Certificates (EPC)

What are they?

Since January of this year the Council has been required to produce an Energy Performance Certificate for each house that it lets to a new tenant.

Energy Performance Certificates (EPC's) give information on how energy efficient the house is on a scale that is rated using a grade from 'A' to 'G'. An 'A' rating is the most efficient, while 'G' is the least efficient. All homes are measured using the same calculations, so you can compare the energy efficiency of different properties.

What does an EPC look like?

An EPC contains Information about energy efficiency and carbon dioxide emissions, which is summarised in two charts that show the energy and carbon dioxide emission ratings. The charts look similar to those seen on electrical appliances, like fridges and washing machines.

When will you get an EPC?

You will either receive an EPC for the property when the Area Housing Office staff visit you to carry out their normal 'settling in visit', or it may be available at the time when you sign your tenancy agreement.

How is the EPC produced?

The Energy Performance ratings are calculated from data gained during an inspection of the property by an accredited DEA (Domestic Energy Assessor). This information forms a SAP rating, which stands for 'Standard Assessment Procedure'.

The data required for the survey is quite varied but some of the basic requirements are:

- Overall floor space and internal volume
- How many habitable rooms there are and what type of heating is in the property
- What is the age of the property and type of construction
- Does the property have double glazing, sufficient loft insulation or cavity wall insulation
- Does the property have Energy Saving light bulbs

The inspection on an average 3 bedroom semi-detached property takes approximately 40 minutes to complete. The surveyor requires access to all rooms including the loft space and the heating source.

At the present time, the Council is only carrying out EPC surveys on void properties and those where tenants are applying to purchase under the Right to Buy scheme. However, in time all the council's properties will require EPC's, and this will be carried out on a phased basis.

Council New Build Housing Update

In April 2009, the Scottish Government announced that the Council has been awarded a funding package of £1 million to enable it to construct 40 new Council houses in Elgin.

It is expected that the construction of the houses will commence in the spring of 2010 with completion towards the end of 2010. These will be the first Council houses built in Moray for almost 20 years.

The announcement will be good news for the many people on our Waiting List and will help ease the severe shortage of affordable rented housing in the area. It is also good news for our tenants who told us in the recent Tenants Survey that building new houses was their top priority for future Council housing investment.

The new houses in Elgin will provide high quality, energy efficient housing that is designed to minimise heating costs to tenants. The mix of housing will cater for the needs of different households with accommodation ranging from 1 bedroom flats to 4 bedroom family houses. Two wheelchair adapted bungalows will be provided as well as six amenity bungalows for elderly people.

Progress with the development of the new houses will be reported in the next edition of the Tenants' Voice.

