

VOICE

The Tenants'

Winter 2009

Work to begin on new Council houses

The first phase of the Council's new build programme is set to start on site early next year, and more houses are being planned in future phases.

The Phase 1 project will involve the construction of 48 houses on a site at Reiket Lane in Elgin. The new houses will be ready for occupation by the end of 2010. The houses are designed to minimise running costs to tenants with high insulation levels. Hot water and heating will be provided by air source heat pumps.



As reported in the last edition of Tenants Voice in April 2009, the Scottish Government announced that the Council had been awarded a funding package of £1 million to enable it to construct 40 new Council houses in Elgin. In June 2009, the Government agreed to increase its funding by £200,000 to

enable us to build a further 8 houses.

In September 2009, the Council submitted a bid to the Scottish Government for funding to assist a second phase of a housebuilding

programme. It is proposed that Phase 2 will provide around 45 houses at a number of locations throughout Moray, including towns in Speyside as well as Forres and Fochabers. The Government will announce in December if the Council's bid has been successful.

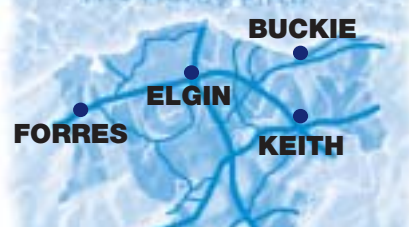
Progress with the development of the new houses will be reported in the next edition of Tenants Voice.



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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 winter edition of Tenants' Voice.

Sadly, since I last spoke to you, Moray has experienced another flood causing extensive damage to many homes and properties, including over 60 Council houses. I would like to express my deepest sympathy to those Council tenants who have suffered damage to their homes and the loss of valuable possessions. The Council is doing everything in its power to support flooding victims and to ensure that their lives return to normal as quickly as possible.

On a more positive note, I am pleased to see that construction will be starting in January 2010 on Phase 1 of the Council's new build programme. This will see 48 badly needed new affordable homes built in Elgin. I am pleased that the Council has submitted a further bid to the Scottish Government for funding to provide another 45 houses. I wish this bid every success.

In September, I had the privilege of attending the 2009 Tenants Conference. It was good to see so many tenants there. Those I spoke to found the day as interesting and informative as ever.

I was sad to hear of the recent passing away of tenant representative Charles French. Charles made an enormous contribution to making tenant participation in Moray the success it has become. He will be greatly missed.

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.

Finally, with the onset of winter, I would like to draw your attention to our Hot Tips for Cold Snaps article. By taking some simple precautions, you can help prevent the distress of burst pipes during the winter months.

Most importantly I would like to wish you, your family and friends a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Councillor Eric McGillivray

Leasing a Garage from the Council

It has come to our attention that in a number of instances tenants have been trying to sublet or assign the lease of garages to other tenants without the Council's knowledge. However, this cannot be done without the Council's consent. A garage lease and the responsibilities attached to it, including liability for rent, will always remain with the tenant to whom the Council granted the lease.

If you wish to give up a garage lease then you must terminate the lease by following the correct procedure and giving a month's notice. If you know of someone who wishes to take over the lease then they must apply to the Council to do so. The Council operates a waiting list for garages and leases are granted to people on the list.



If you need further information on the terms of your garage lease or if you wish to lease a garage, please contact your Area Housing Office for further information.

Rent Setting December 2009

We are seeking your views on proposals to increase rents for new council houses and on how much we should charge for fitting a shower. The proposals below were presented to Councillors at the Communities Committee on the 6th of October and they agreed we should ask you what you think.

In the last edition of Tenants Voice, we advised you that we will be building new Council housing. The first phase is for 48 houses in Elgin and we have made a bid to the Government for them to assist with funding a second phase.

The standard to which new Council houses will be built will be much higher than the standard achieved in the existing housing stock. Houses will be built to modern design standards, with higher space standards in relation to bathrooms and kitchens. The houses will have air source heat pumps and will be very well insulated. Resultantly, there will be significant savings on energy bills for the tenants estimated to be over £7 per week. These new houses will be very similar to new build housing association houses which have much higher rent.

We are seeking your views on our proposal to charge a higher rent for these new build properties. The rent tenants currently pay is based on points awarded for property type, number of bedrooms, energy rating, garden, kitchen standard, and location. We are proposing that the points rating for new build houses in relation to property type and number of bedrooms is increased.

The table below shows what the weekly rent for the new council houses would be under the current policy and what it would be if we increase the points rating as we propose. The table shows comparable housing association rents for the same property types.

House Type	Current Rent	Proposed New Rent	Housing Association Rent
1 bedroomed Ground Floor Flat	£37.43	£45.69	£54.65
2 bedroomed house (semi-detached)	£48.57	£60.17	£69.83
2 bedroomed wheelchair bungalow (semi-detached)	£48.57	£60.17	£77.12
3 bedroomed house (semi-detached)	£53.83	£70.73	£78.94
4 bedroomed house (semi-detached)	£60.32	£75.46	£88.05

In the Tenants Voice last December, we asked you what you thought about us offering to fit over the bath showers if the tenant paid an increased rent. We had a good response and you were in favour of this. We have calculated that for the shower to be paid for in 12 years we would need to charge an extra £2.55 per week.

Please complete the tear off slip below and return to
Iain Terry,
Housing Programmes Manager,
Council Headquarters,
High Street,
Elgin
IV30 1BX



Do you agree that the Council should increase the points rating on property type and bedroom ratio as suggested? **Yes** **No**

Any comments you wish to make?.....

Do you agree that tenants who choose to have a shower fitted by the Council should pay for the cost of the shower over 12 years (at current rates the cost should be £2.55 per week)?

Yes **No**

Any comments you wish to make?.....

Rent increase consultation



Setting rents is a balance between providing affordable housing and ensuring funds for future management and maintenance costs. In

February 2010, the Council will decide its housing budget for the forthcoming year.

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is the budget which funds management and maintenance costs relating to Council housing. As part of the process for preparing the budget, we must consult with you. We have a statutory duty under Section 25 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 to consult with you where we propose to increase rent or service charges that you pay to the Council.

Almost half of HRA expenditure is on repair and improvements to Council houses. Next year, building cost inflation is expected to be around 2.4%.

For the past three years, Moray Council has had the lowest rents in Scotland. In 2009/10, the Council is proposing to continue increasing its rents by 3.5%. This level of increase would add approximately £1.55 to the current average weekly rent of £44.17.

If you have any views on this, please contact

Jill Stewart
 Chief Housing Officer
 Community Services
 The Moray Council, Council Office, High Street
 Elgin, Moray IV30 1BX
 jill.stewart@moray.gov.uk



ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Christmas and New Year Arrangements 2009-2010

Members of the public are asked to note the following arrangements:

Refuse Collection

Over the festive season refuse collection will revert to weekly household waste (green bin) uplifts during the following period:

Week Commencing Monday 21st December 2009 until Friday 15th January 2010 (inclusive)

For those households on the kerbside recycling scheme, fortnightly refuse collection will resume week commencing **18th January 2010** please refer to www.moray.gov.uk for Refuse Collection Calendar. Households not on the kerbside recycling scheme remain unaffected.

Christmas Day and New Year's Day arrangements:

No Collection on these days:

Friday 25th
 December 2009
 Friday 1st
 January 2010

Alternative Collection Day:

Saturday 26th
 December 2009
 Saturday 2nd
 January 2010



Your collection will be earlier than normal - please present your bin/boxes by 7:30am No excess waste will be uplifted

Special Collection and Waste Hotline

Closed from 3pm Thursday 24th December 2009 until Tuesday 5th January 2010



Landfill Sites and Recycling Centres

All facilities will be closed:

Friday 25th December 2009 until 27th December 2009 and Friday 1st January until 3rd January 2010 inclusive

Public Conveniences

All facilities will be closed:

Friday 25th and Saturday 26th December 2009, Friday 1st and Saturday 2nd January 2010



YOUR OLD CHRISTMAS TREE
Your present to the environment this year - RECYCLE YOUR TREE

Please take it to:

The Wood Recycling Training Project, Unit 7
 Chanonry Industrial Estate, Elgin OR
 Any Moray Council Recycling Centre:
 Waterford Road, Forres, Dallachy, Spey Bay
 Balloch Road, Keith
 Gollachy, Golf View Road, Buckie

For further information 01343 557045 or www.moray.gov.uk

Help Scheme is at hand for you to switch to digital TV

Older and disabled people living in North Scotland are being offered help to switch to digital with the Switchover Help Scheme.

The Switchover Help Scheme has been set up to help eligible older and disabled people to make the change to digital on one of their TV sets in their home.

People are eligible if:

- They are aged 75 or over, or
- They have lived in a care home for six months or more, or
- They get (or could get) disability living allowance, or attendance or constant attendance allowance, or mobility supplement, or
- They are registered blind or partially sighted

What's on offer?

For a one-off payment of £40, eligible people will be offered:

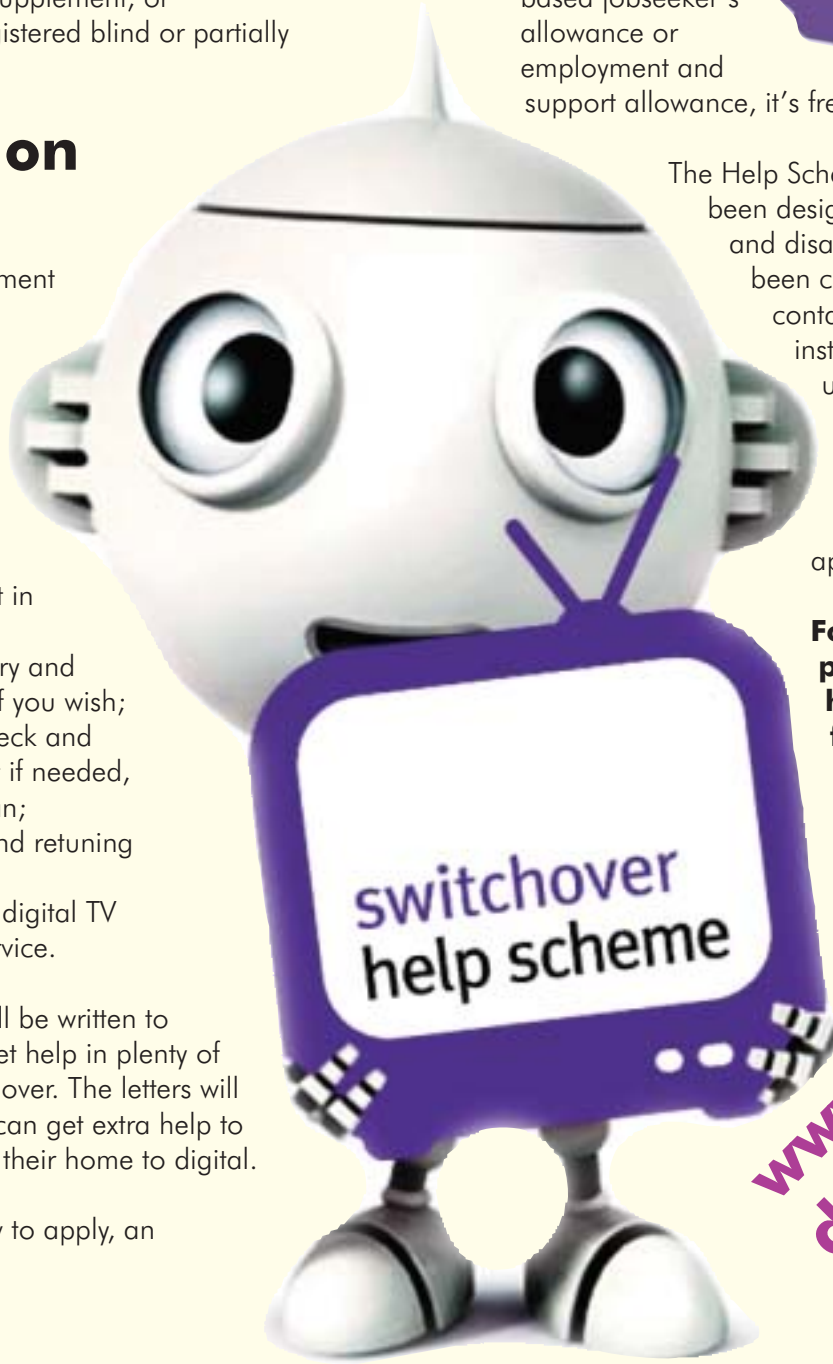
- easy-to-use digital equipment to convert one television set in their home;
- home delivery and installation if you wish;
- an aerial check and replacement if needed, where we can;
- a helpline and retuning advice;
- a 12 month digital TV aftercare service.

Eligible people will be written to directly and will get help in plenty of time before switchover. The letters will explain how they can get extra help to convert one TV in their home to digital.

Details about how to apply, an

explanation of all of the available options and prices are clearly set out in the pack.

Most people will be asked to pay £40 towards the standard offer of help. For eligible people who are also on pension credit, income support, income based jobseeker's allowance or employment and support allowance, it's free.



The Help Scheme is run by the BBC and has been designed around the needs of older and disabled people. Equipment has been chosen to be easy to use, and contact centre, delivery staff and installers have all been trained to understand and respect older and disabled people. All installers are vetted, carry identification and will never call without having made an appointment.

For more information, please visit helpscheme.co.uk; or to find out when your area switches, log onto:

www.digitaluk.co.uk/postcodechecker

This affects you and everyone you know, so please read on.....

Waste management is an important matter that affects you, your neighbours, the environment and something that is not going to go away. The waste in all our household bins ends up in landfill and investigations show that despite the availability of recycling options either at the kerbside, communal recycling bins at flatted properties and banks at supermarkets etc there are still some materials not being recycled.



Biodegradable materials like paper, cardboard and textiles rot in the landfill and create gases which contribute to climate change. By recycling these and other materials like glass bottles and metal food and drink cans it not only saves space in landfill, it reduces consumption of other raw materials.



- Each tonne of recycled paper can save 17 trees, 380 gallons of oil, 3 cubic yards of landfill space, 4000 KW of energy and 7000 gallons of water
- 70% less energy is required to recycle paper compared with making it from raw materials
- Savings on energy consumption when processing, as items do not need to be re-dyed or scoured. Less effluent, as unlike raw wool, it does not have to be thoroughly washed using large volumes of water.
- Reduction of demand for dyes and fixing agents and the problems caused by their use and manufacture.



- Recycling cans saves energy because melting them down takes much less heat than manufacturing new metal. For steel you need only about a quarter of the energy, and for aluminium only about a twentieth.

- Recycling cans saves natural resources because the raw ingredients for both steel and aluminium have to be mined out of the ground, and it obviously makes sense to re-use what we already have. Mining carries a risk of environmental pollution, as well as using energy.

- Using present technology the UK glass industry has the capacity to recycle over one million tonnes of glass each year and this, coupled with the materials unique ability to be infinitely recycled without compromising its quality, creates a compelling case for the recycling of glass. Despite this, glass makes up around 4% of the average household waste bin in Moray

If you are surprised by these facts and even if you're not, please recycle as much of your waste as possible and make this your New Years resolution.

If you would like to discuss ways of increasing your recycling and managing your waste more effectively then please call 01343 557045, visit www.moray.gov.uk or email waste@moray.gov.uk

The Moray Tenants' Conference



The sixth Moray Tenants' Annual Conference was held on 17th September in the Town Hall in Elgin. The conference was well attended by tenants from the council and some of the local housing associations. The number of tenants attending was much higher than last year. There were also guests from local organisations. Staff and Elected Members from the Moray Council also attended as guests and speakers.

The main floor of the hall was filled with stands run by local organisations. These gave out a wide range of useful information to tenants. Exhibitors included the Grampian Fire and Rescue, Waste Aware, The Moray Council, CFine foods, the Area Tenant Forums and SCARF. Springfield Properties exhibited the house designs for Phase 1 of the Council new build programme.

Steven Christie, Chair of the Tenants Core Group opened the conference and paid tribute to Mr Charles French who was a champion for tenant participation not only in Moray but throughout Scotland. Charles had sadly passed away in early September and will be missed by all who knew him.

Steven then introduced Mr Iain Terry, Housing Programmes Manager, who spoke about the Council's proposals to build its first new houses in nearly 20 years. He explained that the Council is proposing to build new houses in phases as funding becomes available, and he gave delegates an idea as to how the first phase of 48 homes at Elgin East will be set out. Councillor Eric McGillivray then took the stage and spoke about Tenant

Participation in Moray. Councillor McGillivray emphasised the importance of tenant participation to the Council and urged delegates to get involved. All four workshops were well attended with tenants given a lot of new and useful information. Workshops subjects included Moray Allotments, Healthy Eating, Telecare and Tenant Participation.

After a buffet lunch there were three presentations on the digital television switchover, fire safety and crime prevention.

The day ended with a free raffle prize draw and everybody went home with a fruit pack supplied by CFine Foods and sponsored by TIO.

The organisers wish to thank all the guest speakers, the workshop facilitators, all those who brought displays, the Moray Council Catering Ladies, all those who donated prizes for the prize draw, and members of the Council Housing Team for all their assistance.

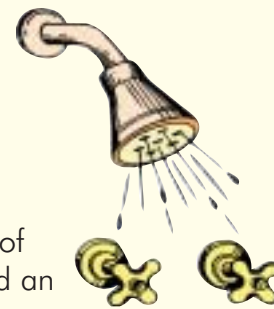
The organisers want to know what you would like to see at the next conference in 2011. If you have any ideas or suggestions' please contact Steven Christie on 01343 540524.

Next year, the conference will take to the road, with local events possibly taking place in your neighbourhood. Details of these events will be made available when known.

Tenants Voice Quiz

Win £50

Shower update



Last year, the winter edition of the 'Tenants' Voice' included an article about the fitting of showers.

Tenants who did not currently have showers were asked if they were interested in having one installed, and whether they would be willing to pay additional rent to cover the cost of the installation.

Following the return of a number of responses, a report was submitted to the Housing Sub-Committee, and it was decided to offer showers to tenants who will be getting kitchens from the 2010/11 financial year onwards.

Tenants wishing to take up this offer through the kitchen replacement programme will be asked to pay additional rent of approximately £2.55 per week over a period of 12 years. The exact figure and agreed period will be confirmed following a period of consultation with tenants.

To allow other tenants who are not having kitchens fitted to apply to have a shower installed, it is proposed that a separate budget will be included from the 2010/11 financial year onwards.

The Council is currently developing an appraisal method to place applications on a priority list. The appraisal method will be submitted to the Housing Sub Committee for approval early in the new-year to allow this additional programme to be carried out in financial year 2010/11.

As details of this scheme develop, more information will be made available through the 'Tenants voice'.

Tenants' Voice Quiz Entry Form

Name:

Address:

Telephone Number:

Email Address

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.

1. Which country has a new parliament building known as the "Beehive"?
.....
2. Which team won the first FA Cup final?
.....
3. What is the name of the highest waterfall in North America?
.....
4. What kind of bridge is the Golden Gate Bridge?
.....
5. How many different combinations of dots are used in Braille?
.....
6. Which city is home to the 8th century "Book of Kells"?
.....
7. What was the native language of Jesus Christ?
.....
8. Who was the prime minister at the time of the Boston Tea Party?
.....
9. The Four Noble Truths are central to which religion?
.....
10. What is the name given to the inhabitant of Sydney, Australia?
.....
11. Where did the golfer Tom Watson win his first British Open?
.....
12. In heraldry, what does "addorsed" mean?
.....
13. Which decimal number is equal to the binary number 10?
.....
14. What is the English name for the Jewish festival of Pesach?
.....
15. Boadicea's tribe, the Iceni, lived in which part of Britain?
.....
16. In which Canadian province is Uranium City?
.....
17. Which cartoon character made his screen debut in 1935?
.....
18. Which bird has a display flight called "roding"?
.....
19. Which planet has a moon called Larissa?
.....
20. What sort of creature is a "swartback"?
.....

Flooding in Moray September 2009



Housing staff and volunteers help clear a flooded house in Elgin

On 4 September 2009, severe flooding affected parts of Elgin, Fochabers, Rothes and other areas, causing damage to Council and other privately owned houses.

As part of the emergency response, floodguards were fitted to properties in Elgin and Rothes. Tenants were evacuated to the Rest Centre on the morning and afternoon of 4 September.

A total of 66 Council owned houses have been flood damaged. 61 of these are located in Elgin, 2 in Fochabers and 3 in Rothes.

After the flooding subsided, displaced tenants and residents were offered a choice of temporary accommodation options, depending on their housing needs and the availability of accommodation.

All of the flood damaged houses have been cleared out, with many tenants' goods going into storage and damaged goods disposed of.

We have prepared a restoration works timetable and programme, which the contractors are following. Initially this involves the contractors stripping and drying out the houses before restoration works start. In the meantime, we have pre ordered all the materials necessary to complete the works. These have been delivered to our stores in Elgin. Our contractors are using these, as they need them, to complete the works.

Tenants have been given the choice of colours for kitchen worktops and fronts. Decoration vouchers are also available for tenants who prefer to decorate themselves.

Keeping in touch

Staff from our Flood Team (01343 563429) have been in touch with all residents affected by flooding to ensure they get the help that they need.

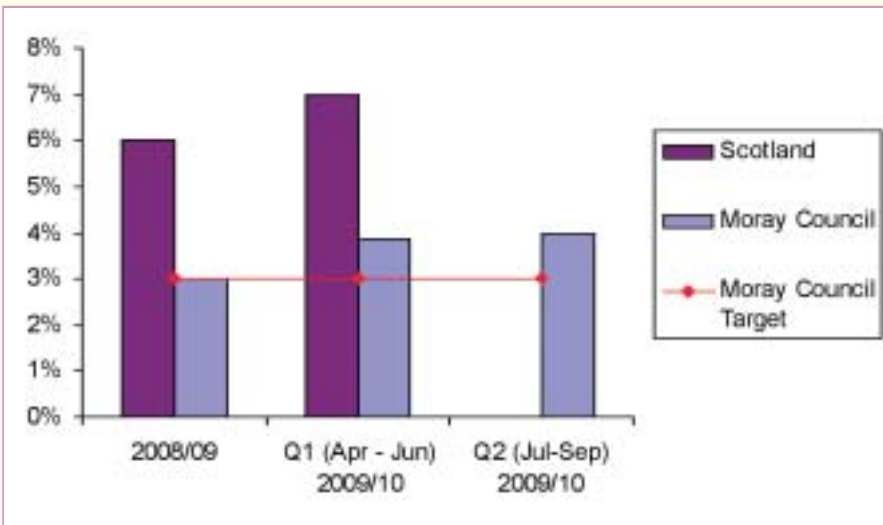
We have also asked displaced tenants how they want us to keep in touch with them to keep them advised of progress with their homes.

We are also holding surgeries twice weekly in Bishopmill House, Elgin and have written to all tenants to clarify the arrangements for temporary accommodation charges. We are making sure that no one suffers any undue financial hardship as a result of flooding.

To date we have produced and distributed 4 newsletters. We have been in touch with each tenant affected by flooding to give them a specific date for the completion of restoration works to their home.

If you or someone you know has been affected by flooding and need any advice or assistance please contact our staff on the Flood Team.

Housing Performance and Service Standards



Rent Arrears

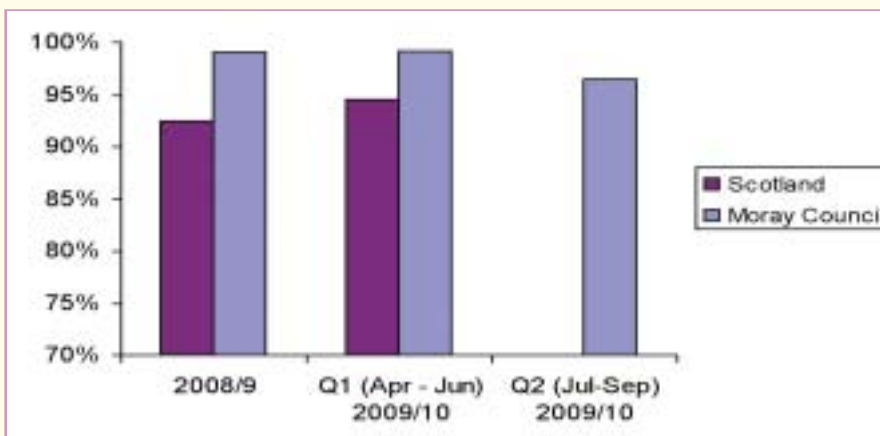
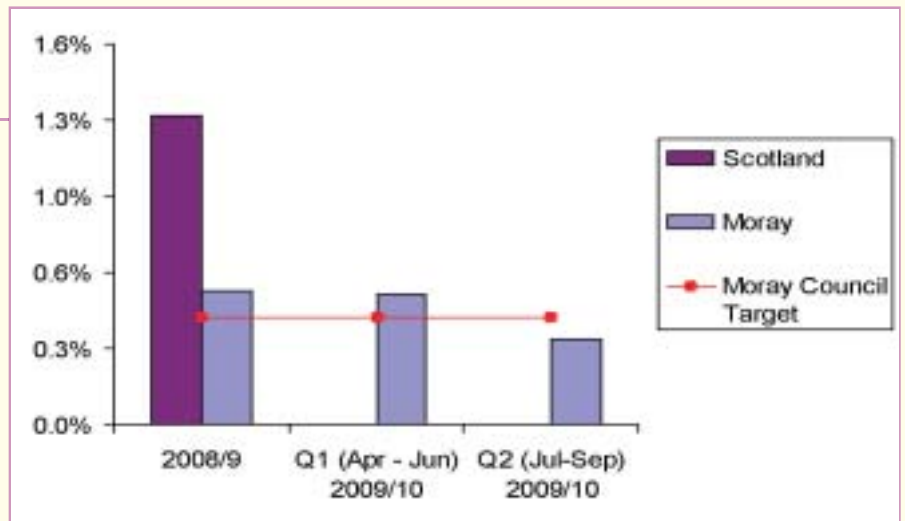
We set a target level of rent arrears to be achieved each year. We report our performance against this target.

In 2008/09 we had the lowest level of rent arrears in Scotland at 3.01% of net rent receivable. Performance has slipped slightly in the first two quarters but this is typical at the start of a new financial year. So far two tenants have been evicted due to 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.

We didn't quite meet our target in 2008/09 but compared well against the Scottish average losing less than 0.6% of rental income to empty properties. A change to our procedures has contributed towards significant improvements in quarter 2.



Repairs

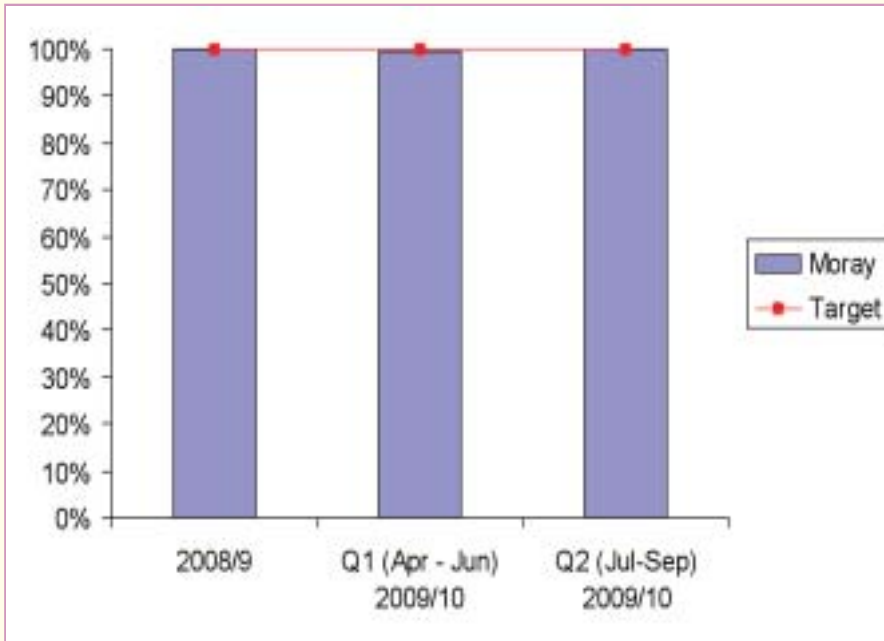
We set and publish targets each year for carrying out repairs within timescales.

Our overall performance remains good against the Scottish average. However, our performance dipped slightly in September as a result of pressure in responding to flooding in the Elgin area.

Gas Safety

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

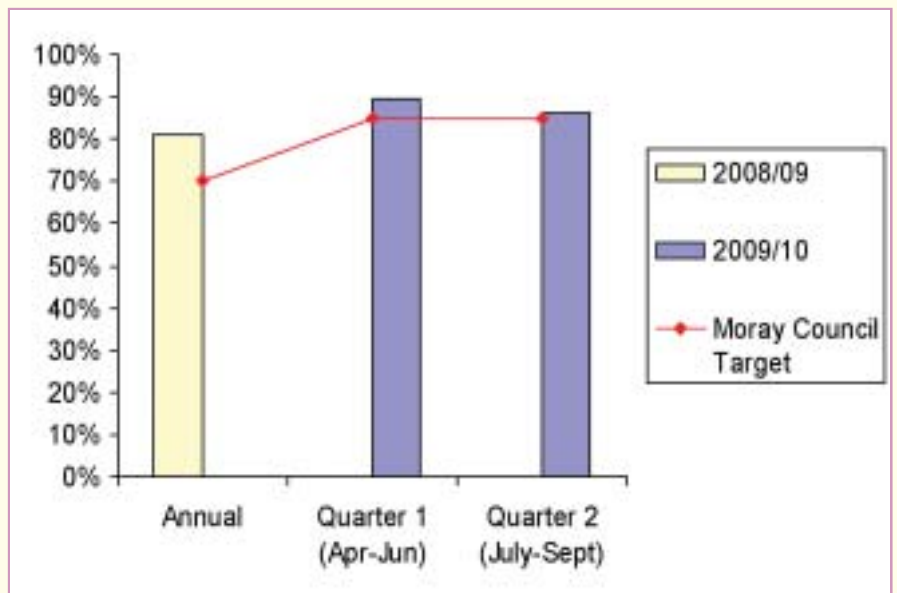
We are continuing to perform well in ensuring properties with gas are serviced annually. In Quarter 2, 99.8% of our properties with gas held a valid safety certificate.



Anti Social Behaviour

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

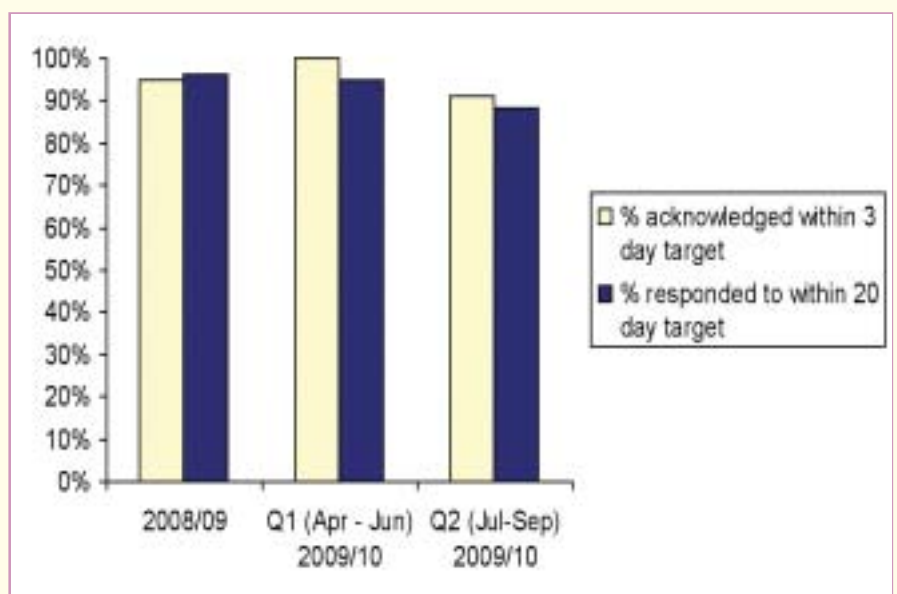
After exceeding our 2008/09 target we increased it to 85% of interventions leading to improvements in the situation. We have managed to achieve our new target for the first two quarters.



Handling Complaints

We aim to respond to complaints within target.

There has been a slight slippage in performance as a result of the increased workload for staff brought on by the flooding.



Interview: Mike McClafferty, The Moray Council Senior Area Housing Manager

1 As the Senior Area Housing Manager, what is your role within Moray Council?

My job is to support four area housing teams to ensure we deliver high quality housing management services to Council tenants within agreed policies and targets.

Among these services are processing repair requests, letting empty houses, rent arrears and neighbour dispute management, mutual exchanges, housing enquiries and ensuring our estates and properties are kept in good condition. I also have responsibility for services to gypsy/travellers in Moray.

2 How long have you been involved in Housing?

I have been involved in housing for 34 years. I joined Glasgow District Council's Housing Department in 1975 as a clerical officer. At that time Glasgow District Council owned over 180,000 houses, therefore it was a big department with many specialist sections.

I started in the former tenant arrears recovery section and moved on to allocations, transfers, housing benefit then modernisation sections.

I left Glasgow District Council in 1979 to join the Scottish Special Housing Association (a national organisation), working in urban regeneration projects in Glasgow. This involved working with architects and tenants groups on renovation and new build projects, which were very enjoyable.

In 1982, I moved north with my family to take up the Area Housing Managers job for Grampian and the Highlands with Scottish Special Housing Association. This was quite a different job and involved delivering housing management services to around 4,500 households from 3 offices in Aberdeen, Peterhead and Tain. Many of the tenants were incoming workers who had moved to work in the oil industry, which was taking off at the time. This also involved building or renovating around 1,000 houses in different locations in or around Aberdeen.

3 What was your role before you came to Moray Council?

My job was the Housing Services Manager for Grampian Property Partners, based in Aberdeen.

This was a housing management company, which was collectively owned by 8 Housing Co-operatives. The co-operatives were set up in 1992, to enable tenants to transfer from Scottish Homes, the Scottish Special Housing Association's successor after it was abolished in 1989. In total around 1500 tenants transferred.

My job was to deliver services to each housing co-operative through a housing management contract. Among these were allocations, transfers, rent arrears, exchanges, void management, tenant participation and repairs. Since I left, the co-operatives and the management company have restructured and are now known as Tenants First Housing Co-operative.

4 Is there anything that you would change about your job?

No, not really, more hours in the day I suppose.

I am very lucky, I have never been bored. Housing management covers such a wide range of activities. No two days are ever the same.

5 What are your views on Tenant Participation?

I am keen supporter of tenant participation. I think it is critical to the success of building communities and enabling people to shape the housing management service.

I think it is vital that we know what tenants think about our service and highlight the areas we can work together to improve it. I am often reminded how well our staff know tenants and vice versa. Being approachable is very important, if you are working together.



6 Moray Council's Housing Services were inspected last year what are your thoughts on the results achieved?

I was delighted that we gained a Grade A award for Housing Management from the Scottish Housing Regulator.

This is the highest award possible and achieved only by two other Councils in Scotland.

I was particularly pleased for the recognition it gave to all the staff who deliver the housing management service in the Area Housing and Housing Needs Teams.

7 What do you think could be done to ease the current homelessness situation?

In a word more resources to help build more houses. In Moray, we have a chronic shortage of affordable housing. That said, there are many reasons for homelessness arising and whilst building more houses would help a lot there are other things we can do to help. Many of these activities are set out in our Homelessness Strategy. For example, making sure that existing tenants get the support they need to sustain their tenancies so that these don't break down and they get evicted. Also, giving people the advice and support they need to help them avoid becoming homeless.

8 If you could have your "dream job" what would it be, and why?

Someone once told me be careful what you dream for, so I don't think that dream jobs as such exist. I think if you enjoy what you do and get a lot of satisfaction from it then to me that gets pretty near a "dream job".

9 What do you do to relax; do you have interests or hobbies?

I go walking with my wife and our 3 dogs regularly near our home.

I also like to go fly-fishing to remote places in Scotland and Ireland.

There is something very relaxing about both activities.

I try to avoid watching too much news although my wife would tell you different.

10 would you quit your job if you won the lottery?

Yes, is the honest answer.

Not because I don't like my job but simply it would give me more time and money to do other things, such as travelling and helping my family.

Make a difference to your health with Met Office Healthy Outlook COPD Forecast Alert



Moray Community Health and Social Care Partnership has signed up to use the Met Office Healthy Outlook? COPD Forecast Alert service this coming Winter. The service will run until the end of March 2010.

We would like to invite any person in the Moray area who has been diagnosed with COPD to take advantage of this free service which aims to help you to manage your condition and stay well throughout the Winter months.

The weather can affect the breathing of people with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease and can be made worse when there are viruses around that cause coughs and colds. Healthy Outlook? is a preventative service, aimed at helping people with COPD stay well.

The service helps COPD patients manage their condition more effectively by warning them of periods of increased risk to their health.

If you decide to take part you will receive an automated telephone call, at a time suitable to you, when poor conditions are forecast. During the call the expected conditions will be explained and we will run through a few questions to ensure you are doing all that you can to help prevent your condition from becoming worse.

The calls will not happen every week. They will only take place when the forecast indicates the weather could affect your condition. When calls are made they will take place on a Tuesday or Wednesday and you can tell us what time you would prefer to be called on the slip below.

Last winter the service was used by over 8,000 people with COPD across the UK and eight out of ten people surveyed found the calls useful.

If you think you or anyone you know would benefit from the service please contact us on 01343 567110 or by email at moray.copd@nhs.net.

For further information about the Service generally please contact the Project Manager, Lorna Bernard on 01343 567185 (lorna.bernard@moray.gov.uk).

Housing Sub-Committee Update

The Housing Sub Committee has met twice since the last edition of Tenants Voice.

At its meeting in August 2009, the Sub Committee received a joint presentation from the Council's Chief Housing Officer and Housing Needs Manager on homelessness and housing allocation issues in Moray. The Sub Committee heard that due to the severe shortage of availability of affordable rented housing, homelessness continues to be the major issue in terms of the allocation of Council housing.

The August meeting received the first of the quarterly Area Housing Team reports providing details of the activities of the various housing teams within the estates and neighbourhoods they serve. The Sub Committee also received a report on the Council's plans for communal television aerials in preparation for the digital switchover in 2010. Progress with the implementation of the Tenants Survey Improvement Plan was also reported.

At its meeting in October 2010, the Sub Committee received a report on the impact of the recent floods on residents and housing in Moray. The report detailed the actions being taken by the Council in response to the emergency and the work being undertaken to reinstate affected properties.

Also at this meeting, the Sub Committee considered changes to the Rent Setting Policy to reflect a higher rent for the new Council houses being built and to incorporate additional rental payments for the installation of showers.

Other items on the October agenda included a report on the 2009 Tenants Conference and a report on the Council's bid to the Scottish Government for money for Phase 2 of its new build programme.

At all its meetings, the Sub Committee is given progress reports on the Housing Budget and the Council's investment programme in its homes.

Housing Sub Committee meetings are open to the public. Like all other Council committee reports, the Sub Committee reports and meeting minutes will be available on the Council's website at www.moray.gov.uk

The Moray Lifeline and Telecare Service

additional reassurance for people living in their own homes

What is the Moray Lifeline Service?

The Moray Lifeline Service provides vulnerable people with round the clock monitoring and support and a way of summoning assistance in an emergency even when the telephone is out of reach. This means that more people are able to continue to live safely in their own home.

The key benefits of the service are:

- Extra reassurance for people living on their own
- Immediate response in an emergency
- Support for carers
- Access to a range of sensors for enhanced safety if your situation changes

Who might benefit from the Service?

You may benefit from the service if you:

- Live alone or are regularly left alone
- Live with a person who could not cope in an emergency on their own
- Are at risk because of restricted mobility, ill-health or frailty
- Are at risk from domestic violence
- Live in an isolated location

The Moray Lifeline Service can be provided alongside any existing services you might have such as home care.

How does it work?

You will need a home telephone line for the Moray Lifeline Service to work.

Basic Alarm Unit and Personal Trigger:

The basic equipment installed in your home consists of a base unit about the size of a telephone and a small personal trigger button, which can be worn as a pendant around your neck, on your wrist or clipped to your clothing.

The base unit is connected to the telephone line

and automatically dials the 24 hour control room in Aberdeen when the alarm is triggered by pushing the button on your personal trigger.

Additional Telecare sensors:

In addition to the personal trigger alarm Telecare sensors could be installed in your home to meet your individual needs. These sensors wirelessly monitor a person's safety and automatically trigger an alarm should a dangerous situation arise. These additional sensors include fall detectors, heat detectors and smoke detectors. However, there are a wide range of solutions on the market which we will consider to ensure any solution best suits your needs.

How to access the Moray Lifeline Service

There are a number of levels to the service and it is important that you get the right solution for your particular needs. You will therefore need to be assessed by a professional, such as a Community Care Officer or Occupational Therapist.

When you are assessed for the service you will be asked to nominate three volunteer keyholders such as relatives, friends or neighbours. The keyholders should ideally live close by and must be willing to be contacted in an emergency to come and help you.

If you are not able to identify three volunteers, your health or social work professional will discuss other options with you.

If you feel that you or anyone you know would benefit from any part of the service, you can request an assessment for the service by contacting your local Community Care Team or by contacting the Moray Council Contact Centre on 01343 563005.

Hot tips for cold snaps

Winter weather can burst your pipes and ruin your home. Follow these hot tips to keep the warmth in and the plumber out!

Prevention is better than cure

Find your stopcock - the tap that turns off the main water supply. Find it now rather than look for it when there's water pouring everywhere! It's probably in the kitchen near the sink. You should now check that it is working properly. If it is not, please report the matter immediately to your area housing office.

Get to know your heating controls. Some central heating thermostats and time switches are complicated. Get advice from your Area Housing Office or independent energy advisor. For more information on energy use please contact The Moray Energy Efficiency Advice Project on **01343 823059**.

You should try and keep your home reasonably warm and check plumbing each morning to make sure that nothing is frozen. When temperatures are low it is a good idea to open the hatch to the roof space (if your house has one). This might add to your heating cost but is worthwhile during the winter to give extra protection to the tank and pipes in the roof space.

When you're at home

If you have gas central heating use the thermostat to keep the temperature comfortable. During the day a good setting is between 18°C and 22°C. If it's freezing outside set the heating to stay on continuously, but turn the thermostat lower during the night. Remember, the higher you set the thermostat the more fuel you will use!

If you have electric storage heating, use the lowest output temperature during the day, this will mean the stored heat will last longer.

When you're away

If you've got gas central heating and you're away in cold weather, you could leave the heating on continuously with the thermostat turned right down to 6°C. This will stop your pipes freezing, but it won't cost much. If you have any other type of heating, turn the water off at the stopcock and drain off all the cold water. Then turn off the immersion heater. If you have a solid fuel boiler, let the fire die out. Then drain off all the hot water and turn off the immersion. If you need help with this, or would like your heating system or plumbing drained down

whilst you are away please contact your local Area Housing Office where arrangements can be made for an engineer to call.

It is also a good idea to leave keys with a relative or neighbour and to tell your area housing office that you will be away.

If the worst comes to the burst

If your pipes burst, here's what to do. . .

1. Turn the water supply off at the stopcock tap. It's probably near the kitchen sink.
2. Turn the cold taps ON. Make sure the sink and bath plugs are out. And save some water for drinking.
3. Turn the immersion heater and central heating OFF if you have them. If you have a solid fuel boiler, let the fire die out.
4. Turn the hot taps ON.
5. If there's water near the lights or sockets, turn the electricity off at the meter.
6. Catch leaks in basins and soak up water with towels to prevent water damaging your home.
7. Phone your local Area Housing Office or if outside normal office hours phone 08457 565656.
8. Keep warm and dry. Put on extra layers of clothes till things warm up again.

If your pipes have frozen but not burst, follow steps 1, 2 and 7 above. Or if you know which pipe is frozen, very gently warm it with hot water bottles or a hair dryer. Start from the end nearest the tap.

Water damage to ceiling following burst



Investment Strategy Planned Maintenance

During financial year 2009/2010 to date, we have spent around £2m of our annual £8.6m budget million on the maintenance and modernisation of our properties, with several major programmes currently on site and scheduled to be completed by the end of March 2010.

Expenditure for this year covers :-

- Planned Maintenance;
- Estate Works; and
- Cyclical Maintenance

Many projects within the Planned Maintenance Programme are being delivered through a Partnership Agreement between our own Building Services Direct Labour Organisation (DLO), Property Services, and the Housing Capital Programmes Team. The main area of spend under Planned Maintenance is of course our kitchen replacement programme.

In financial year 2009/2010, it is hoped that around 400 kitchens will be replaced, at a cost of £1.9m. At the present point in time we have completed installations in 124 properties, with many more in the various stages of the process.

We also have a budget of £0.6m within the Planned Maintenance programme for door and window replacements.

This is allowing the completion of our programme to fit all our flatted properties with new common access doors and individual flat doors, and we will also make a start on replacing older windows in around 119 homes this year. Around 40 houses and flats have now had their individual doors or common doors replaced, with a further 85 individual properties and blocks of flats being programmed.

In order to improve energy efficiency and reduce tenants fuel bills, we are also replacing older style heating systems with more efficient ones. Some 48 properties have already received new Gas or Air Source Heat Pump

heating systems this financial year, and we are about to embark on the remainder of the heating programme to complete works to a further 50 properties by April 2010.

We are also completing a range of major works under our Roof and Fabric Repairs budget, such as re-rendering of properties, comprehensive internal refurbishment, and replacement of rainwater goods. Our Cyclic Maintenance budget is being 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 the second phase of a 3 year programme will take place during the remaining months of the financial year.

The remainder of the programme consists of Estates Upgrading, Garage Site Upgrading and Safety & Security projects, many of which are currently on site and progressing well, however due to works to repair the 67 houses damaged during the recent floods some of these parts of programmes may experience some minor delays.



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.

SEASONS GREETINGS TO ALL OUR TENANTS



Spread some heat around your home to avoid the misery of bursts but...

Do you know what to do if the pipes freeze?

- Don't wait for the thaw!
- Find the stopcock
- Turn off the water
- Open cold water taps
- Turn off Immersion
- Don't light the fire

IF THERE IS A BURST:

- open all taps in bath and sinks, but keep some water for emergency use.
- switch off electricity if water gets near plugs, switches or wiring.

**Inform the Housing Service at once:
Out of Office Hours: 08457 565656**

During Office Hours:

Buckie 01542 837200

Forres 01309 694000

Elgin 01343 563429

Keith 01542 885500

Water damage to ceiling following burst



If you are going away over the winter period you can ask for a free drain down of your home by contacting your area housing office no later than Friday 18 December 2009.

FESTIVE SEASON HOLIDAYS 2009/2010

**All Council Offices will be closed
from
3.00 pm on
Thursday 24 December 2009
and will re-open at
8.45 am on Tuesday 5 January 2010**



FOR AN EMERGENCY SERVICE

**Please call:
08457
565656**