

VOIC*e*

The Tenants'

Winter 2010

First phase of new homes near completion



The first Tenants will be moving into their brand new Council homes shortly after the New Year. These homes have been built as part of Phase 1 of the Council's new build programme, which saw the construction of 48 houses at Reiket lane in Elgin. The houses have been designed to high modern standards with enhanced levels of insulation to reduce heat loss and save tenants money on energy costs. Heating is provided by energy-efficient air source heat pumps.

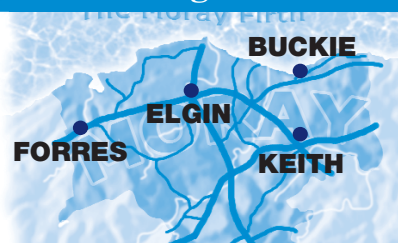
In June of this year, the Scottish Government gave the Council money to build a further 124 houses. 80 houses will be built on the site at Reiket Lane in Elgin, 30 houses at Barhill Road in Buckie and 14 at Alexandra Road in Keith.

These houses will meet the needs of a wide range of households, including large families, single and elderly people and households needing wheelchair adapted accommodation. The Phase 2 projects are scheduled to start on site by March 2011 with completion in 2012. These houses will be built to the same high standards as Phase 1.

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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



the moray council

emergency out of hours: 08457 56 56 56

Dear Tenant,



Welcome to another edition of Tenants Voice.

Tenants will soon be getting the keys to the first new Council houses built in Moray in over 20 years. The completion of this development is a major milestone in the delivery of the Council's housebuilding programme. I am delighted that a further 124 new Council houses will be starting on site in March of next year. The new houses provided by the Council will make a significant contribution to meeting the high demand for affordable housing in Moray.

There was no Tenant Conference year but our tenants groups held a very successful event in Forres in October. The event was well attended by tenants and a wide range of useful information was provided by the various exhibitors.

The Designing Better Services (DBS) programme is changing the way the Council delivers its services and housing is at the forefront of this change. By making better use of information technology, DBS will make it easier for tenants to access services and will help reduce the cost of delivering them. In the current financial climate, it is vital that we continue to maintain and improve our services to our customer. DBS will help us achieve this.

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 Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Councillor Eric McGillivray

Rent Increase Consultation

The Council agrees its Housing Revenue Account budget in February. This budget funds the management and maintenance costs relating to Council housing. 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 the expenditure from the Housing Revenue Account is on repairs and improvements to Council houses. Next year, building cost inflation is expected to be 2.64%.

Moray Council has the lowest Council house rents in Scotland, despite annual increases of 3.5% in line with our Housing Business Plan. If the Council were to consider a rent increase of 3.5% for 2011/12, this would add approximately £1.61 to the current average weekly rent of £45.88.

If you have any views on this, please contact

Jill Stewart

**Head of Housing and Property
Community Services, The Moray Council,
Council Offices, High Street, Elgin. IV30 1BX
Or email jill.stewart@moray.gov.uk**

School Closure Dates

Moray schools finish for the Christmas holidays on Wednesday 22nd December - The children go back to school on Thursday 6th January 2011.

CLOSED

Investing in your homes

During financial year 2010/2011 to date, we have spent around £2m of our annual £7m 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 2011.

Planned Maintenance expenditure for this year covers :-

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

The majority of projects within the Planned Maintenance Programme are now being delivered by our own Building Services section.

The main area of spend under Planned Maintenance is of course our kitchen replacement programme. In financial year 2010/2011, we aim to replace almost 400 kitchens, at a cost of around £1.9m. At the present point in time we have completed installations in around 120 properties, with a number of contracts about to start on site, and work programmed well into the New Year. As

part of this programme we are giving tenants the opportunity to have showers fitted when their kitchens are being replaced, and a number of tenants have taken up this offer. We also have a separate programme of shower installations where tenants can pay for the installation themselves, with the cost being added to their rent, and spread over a number of years. This new programme is currently over subscribed, and we have enough requests to keep this initiative running for a number of years.

We currently have a budget of £0.60m

within the Planned Maintenance programme for door and window replacements. This is allowing us to complete our programme to fit all flatted properties with new common access doors, and continue with the replacement of individual flat doors. Around 60 flats have now had either common or individual doors replaced in the current year. In addition to this, we are making a start on replacing older timber and UPVC windows, with around 300 homes programmed for this year, and these numbers likely to increase substantially in future years as our priority moves from doors to windows. We have completed window installations in around 85 properties so far this year.

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 received new Gas or Air Source Heat Pump heating systems in the previous financial year, and we are about to embark on further installations, with works being carried out to around 50 properties by April 2011.

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 programme of pre-painterwork repairs and external painterwork. The Council is in the process of renewing a large number of our existing smoke detectors, and the final 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.

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 at Mosstodloch.

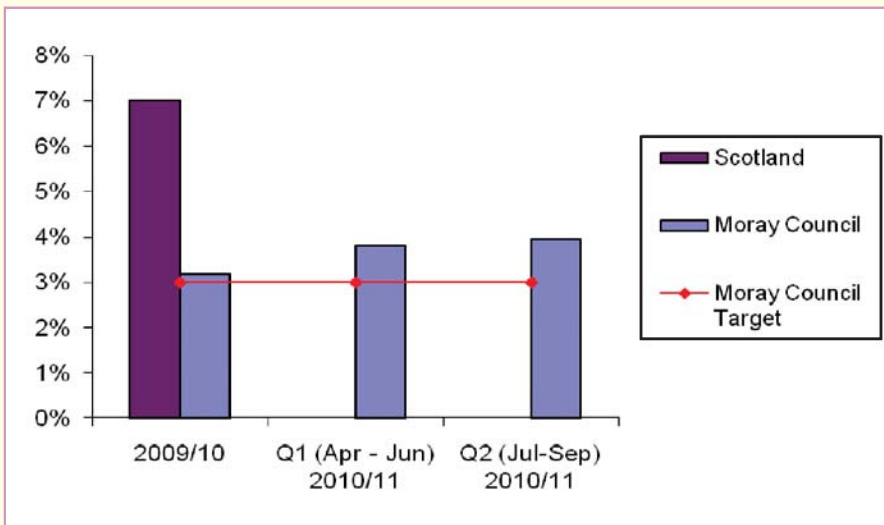


Housing Performance and Service Standards

Rent Arrears

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

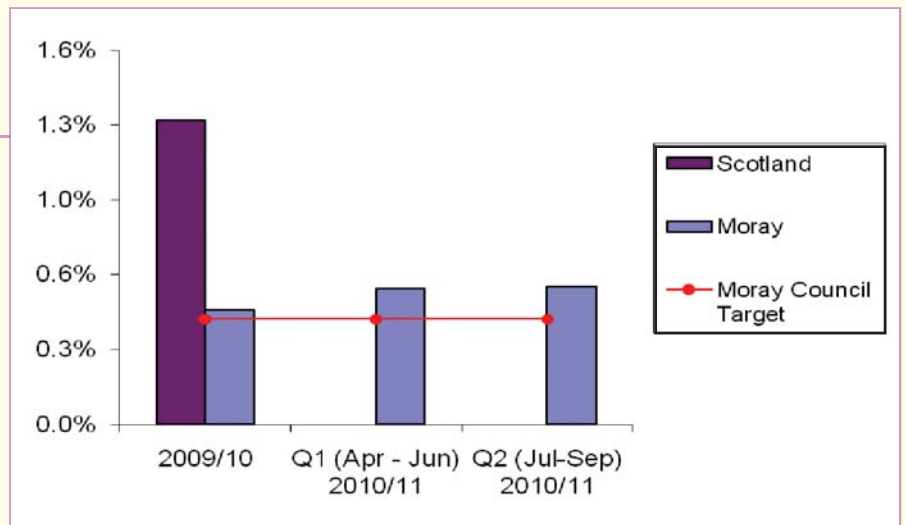
Although we just missed our target of 3.18% last year, we performed well against the Scottish average. Performance has slipped slightly in the first two quarters but this is typical at the start of a new financial year. In this financial year to date, one tenant has been evicted due to non-payment of rent.



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.

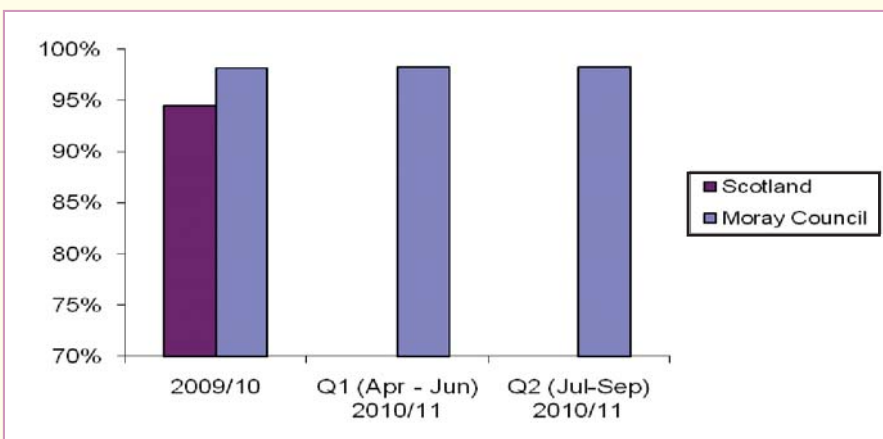
Less than 0.6% of rental income was lost due to properties being empty during Quarter 2. The Scottish average is 1.3% so this is a good result. We are continuing to work towards our target of 0.45%.



Repairs

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

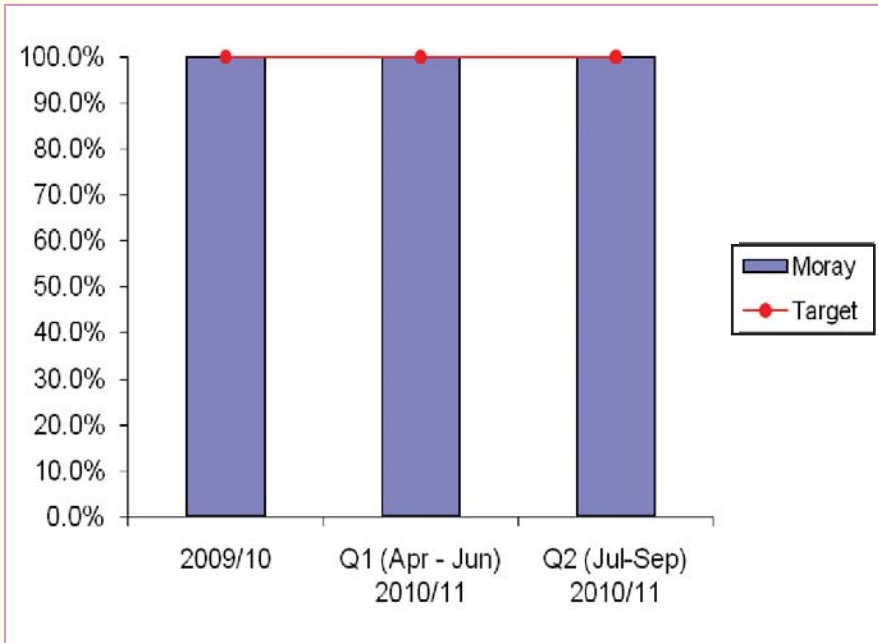
The percentage of repairs carried out within the timescale has been consistent for the first two Quarters of this year with 98.2% of repairs being carried out within their timescale.



Gas Safety

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

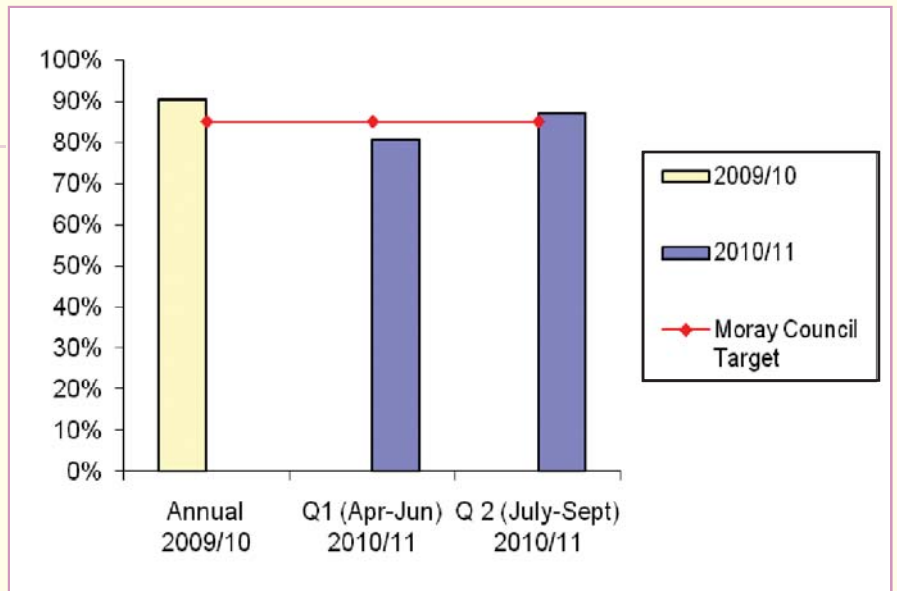
We are continuing to perform well in ensuring properties with gas are serviced annually. In Quarter 2, 99.9% of our properties with gas held a valid safety certificate.



Anti Social Behaviour

We monitor the extent to which intervention in neighbourhood dispute etc complaints affects improvement.

We increased our target last year to 85% of interventions leading to improvements in the situation. We have managed to achieve an improvement in an average of 84% of cases over the first half of this year.

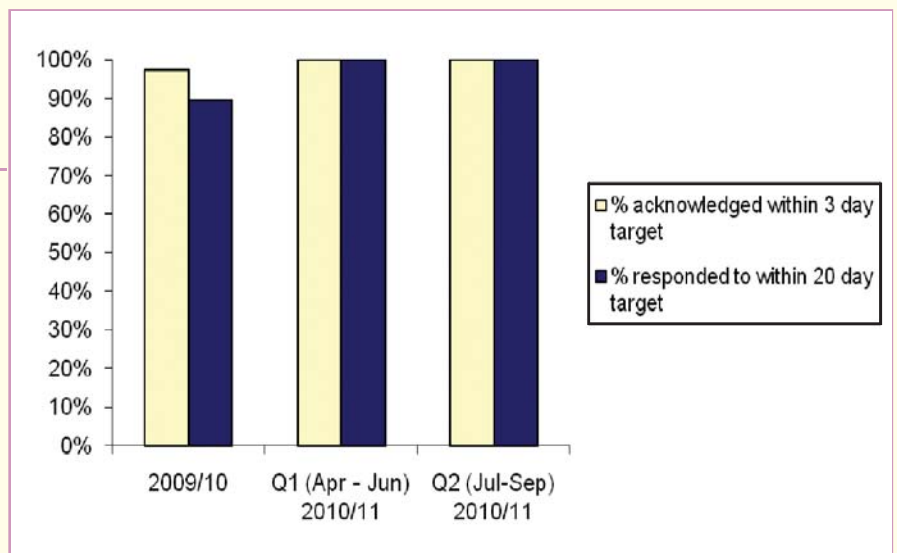


Handling Complaints

We aim to respond to complaints within target.

We aim to acknowledge and respond to 100% of complaints within target this year.

During the first two Quarters of this year, we have managed to achieve this.



Council Housing through the Ages

THE GLASGOW HERALD, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 14, 1938.

It would appear that a shortage of council housing is not a new problem. The image (above) shows an article from the Glasgow Herald newspaper on Oct 14th 1938. The article, entitled "Housing Problems in the North" describes a visit from the Secretary of State for Scotland to Elgin, Lossiemouth and Buckie to discuss housing need in the area.

The Department of Health had been pressing the Elgin Town Council to proceed with the building of an additional 300 houses, but the council were unable to do this due to the prohibitive £40,000 (approximately £2 million in today's money) cost of installing a new sewage system.

In a sign of what was to come, no extra government grants were available due to the heavy armaments programme going on in preparation for World War 2.

The article calls for the building of 1 and 2 roomed houses due to the large proportion of households consisting of 1, 2 and 3 people and that it would be "uneconomical to build houses of 3 or more rooms".

Today, our biggest demand for affordable housing is for family sized accommodation to relieve overcrowding and adapted properties for the aging population.

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HOUSING PROBLEMS IN THE NORTH

Scottish Secretary Hears of Difficulties

MR COLVILLE'S MEETINGS AT ELGIN AND BUCKIE

Mr John Colville, Secretary of State for Scotland, continuing his North of Scotland tour yesterday, had meetings at Elgin with members of Elgin Town Council and with a deputation from Moray and Nairn County Council. Later in the afternoon he conferred with Lossiemouth civic authorities, and in the evening he saw members of Buckie Town Council.

Lord Provost Mackenzie, Elgin, drew attention to the fact that the Department of Health had been pressing Elgin Town Council to proceed with the building of something like 300 houses.

The Council, however, could not accede to that request for various reasons, chief among which was that before doing so it would be necessary to spend £40,000 on a new sewage system.

TO REVISE SUBSIDIES

Mr Colville admitted that the problem of cost was a difficult one, particularly in view of the heavy armaments programme, which meant that it was impossible meantime to get extra Government grants. He gave an assurance, however, that before the end of the year he would make an announcement in regard to revised rates of housing subsidies which were necessary in view of the greatly increased building costs.

PLEA FOR SMALLER HOUSES

Points relating to housing were raised by the Town Clerk, Mr A. G. Cockburn, who emphasised the urgency of provision being made for the building of one or two roomed houses.

He mentioned that a large proportion of the population consisted of families of one, two, and three persons, and that it would be uneconomical for the Town Council to build houses of three or more rooms to house these people. With the unit grant available he thought it would be only fair that the Department should give special consideration to burghs such as theirs, and not tie them down to the conditions that prevailed in large cities.

Mr Cockburn, who also referred to some of the anomalies created by the Local Government Act of 1929, said he did not feel they were getting a fair deal under that Act.

"TWO-EDGED BLESSINGS"

Lord Moray, who emphasised the need for economy on public expenditure, described subsidies and grants as "two-edged blessings."

"Often," said Lord Moray, "these grants act as bribes which make local authorities go in for expenditure that was quite unnecessary, and very often they are used as threats because they can be with-

drawn if a local authority does not do this or that at the behest of a Government Department."

NAVY'S DEBT TO BUCKIE PROVOST SUGGESTS THAT R.N.R. CENTRE BE SET UP

When Mr Colville, Secretary of State for Scotland, visited Buckie last night, it was pointed out to him by Provost Merson that during the recent mobilisation of the Naval Reserve only one boat was left at Buckie out of 100 which would have been able to leave for the East Anglian herring fishing.

Every one of the 99 other crews had from two to five men in the Naval Reserve. That was an asset, said the Provost, which the nation could not afford to see go out of existence.

He asked the Secretary of State to see if an R.N.R. centre could not be established in Buckie.

HERRING TRADES PLEA

Regarding the herring industry, the Provost said something could be done to improve the markets if they got a Herring Board against restriction and with a go-ahead policy of expansion instead.

It would be a great pity if they were to give fishermen new boats if they found after they got them that they had no markets for their fish. There was a certain amount of spathy among the fishermen in asking for new boats, but if they got markets the fishermen would soon get boats.

The Provost then drew attention to the position of Buckie Harbour, upon which they had been compelled to stop repayment to the Development Commissioners for the past two years owing to the reduction in the size of the herring fleet, and he also brought up the questions of water supply, housing, hospital, increase of old age pensions, and A.R.P.

Regarding A.R.P., he said they had found that they in Banffshire could not deal with the Home Office in London. This work should be transferred to a Department in Edinburgh in the new Government offices.

MR COLVILLE'S REPLY

The Secretary of State, in reply, said the whole trouble in the herring industry was getting the herring sold. He could assure them he was very keen on an active marketing policy. Although the Herring Industry Board had considerable difficulties to meet in marketing, it would be a mistake to assume that by bargaining the foreign market for herring could not be increased. The market at home should be bigger than it was, and he personally was a little disappointed that the efforts made in that direction had not met with more success. They must continue to try to improve their herring policy.

He asked for co-operation and good will between the New Herring Board and the industry. He also replied on the other points raised by the Provost.

NO VOTE = NO VOICE

Are you Registered to Vote?



If you are over 16 and a UK, Irish, Commonwealth or European Union citizen resident in Moray – you should be!

Independent research in the UK suggests that a high proportion of residents of tenanted housing are not registered to vote.

One report claims that more than 50% of tenants have not registered to vote. With elections for the Scottish Parliament due to take place next Spring it is vital that citizens ensure that they are registered to vote. The Grampian Electoral Registration Office will issue a canvass form to every household in early September. Householders will be requested to make sure that the name of anybody who is entitled to be registered and resident at that address is included on the canvass form.

The names of existing electors already registered at the address will be pre-printed on the form. Householders will be asked to cross out the names of anybody who is no longer resident and add any names of new residents who would qualify as voters.

Citizens can also use the canvass form to request to vote by post in future elections and can also make sure that their name is omitted from any registers purchased by direct marketing organisations that might issue 'junk' mail by ticking the box to indicate that they wish to be omitted from the Edited Register that is sold to such organisations.

The canvass form comes with a freepost return envelope which the householder can use to return the form.

If there are no changes to the names on the form, the householder can respond using a convenient free telephone or internet response service as an alternative to posting the form back.

If you have any questions regarding Electoral Registration please telephone 01343 541203, email ero@grampian-ero.gov.uk, web www.votemoray.org, or write or visit the Electoral Registration Office at 234 High Street, Elgin, IV31 1BA.

Housing Sub-Committee Update

There has been only one meeting of the Housing Sub Committee since the last edition of Tenants Voice.

At its meeting on 3 September 2010, Steve Christie, Chair of the Moray Core Group, and Mike McClafferty, the Council's Housing Services Manager, gave a joint presentation on the Tenant Participation Strategy. The Sub Committee heard about the successes of the strategy in helping the Council engage with tenants to improve housing services and to respond to their needs. The Sub Committee received a report on organisational changes with the Housing Service. As part of this

report an update was given on progress with the implementation of the Designing Better Services programme which aims to improve efficiency in the delivery of Council services.

Other reports to the September meeting covered progress with the Council new build programme and the results of tenant feedback on New Tenant Surveys and Planned Maintenance contracts.

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.

Keeping Moray Moving in Winter

Dealing with harsh winter conditions is not a new experience for Moray Council. However the winter of 2009/10 was exceptional and was widely acknowledged as being the most severe for nearly 50 years.

The Moray Council ranks 8th in Scotland in terms of the scale of it's roads network, much of which is on high ground and vulnerable to winter weather. To enable the Roads Department to keep the main roads open, roads and footways are allocated a priority from 1 to 5, based upon various factors such as traffic volumes, bus routes, and access to schools, shops and medical facilities. Streets are cleared in a planned and prioritised manner, generally starting in the busier central shopping areas and working outwards to housing estates. 43% of carriageways and 13% of footways are treated as a priority 1 for gritting, a higher percentage than in both Highland and Aberdeenshire.

By the start of the 2009/10 winter the Moray Council had 444 grit bins spread throughout the area. A number of requests for additional bins were received from individuals and community groups both during and since last winter. As a result 44 new bins were issued during last winter and at least

a further 16 bins will be deployed before the start of this winter. In addition, a number of damaged bins will be replaced.



There is also a need for community resilience to be encouraged in rural areas, for example, households being better prepared ahead of severe weather by stocking up on food supplies, prescriptions and heating fuel.

Given the variability of Moray's weather it is not possible to guarantee that roads and footways will remain free of ice and snow at all times. Despite the considerable efforts made by the roads authority, drivers and pedestrians must also play their part. The Roads Maintenance Section, other Council Departments, contractors, farmers, emergency services, businesses, volunteer groups and members of the public all worked in often horrendous conditions to get Moray moving last winter – here's hoping for an easier winter this year.

A full report on the Council's 2009/10 Winter Service Review can be found at http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_68379.html

Calling all children..!

We're inviting all tenants' children/grandchildren aged 12 and under to enter our Winter drawing competition. All you have to do is create a picture showing "my house in winter".

The drawing should be no bigger than A4 and the design can be in pencil, crayon, paint, pen or a collage. On the back of each drawing should be the child's name and age, and the name, address and contact number for the tenant submitting their entry.

The competition is split into two age groups – 7 and under, and 8 to 12 year olds – and the winning artist in each age group will be awarded WH Smith vouchers and appear in the next edition of Tenants Voice.

All entries should be sent to Tina Ash at The Moray Council, High Street, Elgin, Moray IV30 1BX or handed into any of the local Access Points by 28th January 2011.



Win + Win + Win



WINNER OF QUIZ

Councillor Eric McGillivray presents the prize to the winner of the summer edition quiz, Ms Jane Bonner of Garmouth.



Christmas Quiz - Win £50

1. What day is St Stephen's Day?
.....
2. In A Christmas Carol, who was Scrooge's dead business partner?
.....
3. What is the biggest selling Christmas single globally?
.....
4. What red-blooming Christmas plant came originally from Mexico?
.....
5. What is the star sign of people born on 25th December?
.....
6. What is the popular name for little sausages wrapped in bacon?
.....
7. Christmas Island is a territory of which country?
.....
8. Which vegetable is often included in the ingredients of a Christmas pudding?
.....
9. London's Trafalgar Square Christmas tree is traditionally given by which country?
.....
10. What colour are the berries of the mistletoe plant?
.....
11. In the film It's a Wonderful Life, what is the name of George Bailey's guardian angel?
.....
12. What are the name of the three wise men?
.....
13. Who wrote How the Grinch Stole Christmas?
.....
14. Which poem by Clement Moore was originally titled A Visit from Saint Nicholas?
.....
15. In the song The Twelve Days of Christmas how many pipers are there?
.....

Tenants' Voice Quiz Entry Form

Name:

Address:

.....

Telephone Number:

Email Address

Please return entry forms to: Tenants Voice Quiz, P & D, The Moray Council HQ, Elgin IV31 1BX or drop it into your local Housing Office by 28th January 2011. The winner will received a £50 shopping voucher.



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.



AVIVA

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,

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.

Please note that some tenants in flood-risk areas may not be able to get insurance through this scheme.

For further details please contact Housing Services on 01343 563429



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

New Online Mutual Exchange Register

We have been working with other social landlords in Aberdeenshire and Moray on a new system to make it easier for tenants to find another tenant to swap properties with. This is part of the common housing register project we have been working on.

This means if you are currently a tenant with us you can register your property online for free and this will allow you to search for other tenants who might want to swap with you. The other good news is the system covers over 150 Landlords throughout the UK so even if you are looking at moving away from the area this system will be able to help you. The system will not be live until the 10th January 2011. After this date you can go to:



www.apply4homes.houseexchange.org.uk

You then need to register on the site to get full access to the information although you can search for basic information without registering.

If you have any questions or feedback about the service please let us know.

Waste Collection Over The FESTIVE PERIOD



2010 DECEMBER						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

2011 JANUARY						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

**Purple – residual (green bin) collections for all of Moray
Fortnightly collections will resume 17th January 2011**

Residual bins will be collected on corresponding coloured weeks:

Buckie	Findochty
Craigellachie	Portgordon
Cullen	Portknockie
Duffus	Roths
Elgin	Urquhart

Aberlour	Garmouth
Alves	Hopeman
bogmoor	Keith
Burghead	Kingston
Cummingston	Kinloss
upper Dallachy	Lhanbryde
Nether Dallachy	Lossiemouth
Dufftown	Mosstodloch
findhorn	Newmill
Fochabers	Spey Bay
Forres	Urquhart

As Christmas and New Year fall on Saturday and Sunday, domestic collections will not be affected. From January 2011, Keith, Aberlour, Dufftown and Newmill will be moving onto the alternate week (they'll change from yellow to pink) this will be advertised in the local press nearer the time and the calendar will be amended.



YOUR OLD CHRISTMAS TREE

You can take your tree to any Moray Council Recycling Centre or to the Wood Recycling Training Project, Unit 7 Chanonry Industrial Estate, Elgin. It can also be presented with your garden waste but only on the first brown bin (garden waste) uplift of the year.

A Day in the Life of.. Richard Anderson, Housing Needs Manager



1. As Housing Needs Manager can you describe your role within the Moray Council

The Housing Needs Manager is responsible for the management and delivery of the following key services in Moray - Homelessness, Housing Allocations, Provision

of Temporary Accommodation, Sheltered Wardens Service, Housing Support Services and the Homelessness Strategy.

2. Prior to taking up your present position what other jobs have you held

I started with the Council in January 1991 as a Housing Inspector. I moved to homelessness in 1994 and began managing the Homelessness and Allocations Team in 1996. The role of the Housing Needs Manager has changed over the years with more areas of responsibility being added into the Team.

3. What is the worst job you've ever held

I think that all jobs bring with them good and bad points. I believe that I generally have a positive attitude towards life so I have always made the best of the jobs I've had.

4. What is the most difficult part of your job

Managing change within the workplace is currently the most difficult part of my job. I do however believe that services need to change and improve, if we are going to meet current and future public expectation.

5. If you weren't Housing Needs Manager – what job would you see yourself in

I would have loved to have been a bagpipe instructor teaching in local schools. Unfortunately, in Moray there is no provision for this type of instrument. I am however extremely fortunate to teach in Aberdeenshire (Huntly) and have previously done so in Moray within various pipe bands. The personal pride that you get from developing a young person into a musician is something that goes beyond words.

6. How do you think the 2012 homelessness act will affect Moray

I think that the Scottish Government objective which aims to provide all unintentionally homeless people with a right to permanent housing is a good thing. The main obstacle however in implementing this objective in Moray remains the lack of affordable housing within the area.

On a positive note, the Council will complete its first new build of 48 houses in January 2011 and a further 124 will be added to this in 2011/12. This new build programme combined with 288 housing association properties that will be built over the same period will help the Council towards the 2012 target but this alone will not be enough. Demand continues to outstrip housing supply. The Council has already acknowledged this and believes that it must do more to prevent homelessness arising. From 4 October 2010, the Council has set up a new Homeless Prevention Team and work is already underway to prevent homelessness where this is possible.



7. If you could, what would you do to relieve the housing waiting lists

I think that we need to develop a range of different options if we are going to relieve the current pressures on the housing lists. We need to prevent homelessness where this is possible, we need to provide quality of housing information to those who may be a risk of homelessness and we need to continue to lobby Government for funding to address the shortage of affordable accommodation in Moray.

8. What are your views on Tenant Participation

Tenant participation plays an important role in helping the Council work with its customers to improve services. It is vital that the Council continues to engage with tenants to develop high quality services and that tenants continue to influence the way in which the Council delivers these services.

9. What are your thoughts on Designing Better Services

The Council has to continue to improve the services that it delivers. Designing better services has enabled the Housing Service to challenge how it did things and this has already identified ways where the service can be improved.

10. Have you ever considered standing for Government

No

11. When you are not at work, what do you do to relax

I spend time with my family.

12. As always, we ask would you quit your job if you won the lottery

If I won the lottery I would go on a nice long holiday.

Hot tips for cold snaps

Winter weather can burst pipes and ruin your home. Follow these 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 somewhere near the sink. You should check now to see 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. Central heating thermostats and time switches can sometimes be complicated to set or adjust, particularly if you have recently had a new heating system installed. Get advice from the Area Housing Office or an energy advisor. For more information on energy efficiency, contact The Moray Energy Efficiency Advice Project on 01343 823059

If there is a cold snap you should try and keep your home warm and check 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 slightly to your heating cost but is worthwhile during winter conditions to give extra protection to any tanks and pipes in the roof space.

When you're at home

If you have a gas heating system, use the thermostat to keep the temperature comfortable in your home. During the day a good setting is between around 21°C. If it's freezing outside set the heating to stay on continuously, but turn the thermostat lower during the night. But remember, the higher you set the thermostat, the more fuel you will use!

When you're away

If you've got gas central heating and you're likely to be away in cold weather, leave the heating on continuously with the thermostat set right down to 6°C. This will stop your pipes freezing, but it won't cost too much. The council provides a drain down service for tenants, so if you are likely to be away during a cold snap, and would like your heating or plumbing system drained down, 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 . . .

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 anywhere 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 until things warm up again.

If your pipes have frozen, but not burst, contact your local area housing office for advice.

the **MORAY** council *Seasons Greetings*
to all our Tenants

All Council Offices will be closed from **3.00 pm on Friday 24th December 2010 and will re-open at 8.45 am on Wednesday 5th January 2011**

If you have an emergency when our offices are closed and it can only be dealt with by a Council officer, for example, loss of electricity in your home, burst water pipes, homelessness, and so on, please phone 08457 565656 for help.

You should only use this number when we are closed and if the matter is urgent. To help us, please wait to report non-urgent matters when our offices are open again in January.

Out of Office Hours: 08457 565656

During Office Hours:

Buckie: 01542 837200 • Forres: 01309 694000
Elgin: 01343 563429 • Keith: 01542 885500

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 17th December 2010.

