



Ayrshirehousing

TENANT'S NEWSLETTER WINTER 2014

CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS

OFFICE CLOSURE AND EMERGENCY REPAIRS



Our office will close on **Wednesday 24th December 2014** at 12:30pm
and re-open on **Tuesday 6th January 2015** at 9.00am

Please note that if you need to report an emergency repair when our office is closed you should telephone our contractor:

J.D. THOMSON & SON (PROPERTY CARE) LTD
ON 01655 882234

Our contractor will arrange for an appropriate worker to respond if the request is an emergency. It is important that this service is only used for genuine emergencies. Examples of these include: burst pipes, no heating, no electricity or gas, dangerous electric fittings such as switches or sockets, no hot water, insecure doors/windows at ground floor level, toilet not flushing (if there is no other toilet that you can use in the house), blocked sink, bath or drain.

**Wishing all our tenants a
Merry Christmas
and a Happy New Year!**



OUR SEASONAL CARD

You should have received a wee booklet from us with this newsletter. We have worked again with pupils at Ayr's Kyle Academy who are completing their Higher photography course. With our designer Neil McGuire, they've created the six postcards for you to use during the year. The booklet also handsels in the New Year with a donation to the Ayr based homelessness initiative, Care and Share. Neil McGuire has kindly topped up this gift by foregoing part of his fee.

www.ayrshirehousing.org.uk

Text Message 07527360360

Telephone 01292 880120 or Lo-Call 08452712327

 **Ayrshirehousing**

ABOLITION OF THE RIGHT TO BUY: Guide for Tenants

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 received Royal Assent on 1 August 2014. This means that the Right to Buy will end for those tenants of Ayrshire Housing who currently have the Right to Buy on 1 August 2016. Any application made after

31 July 2016 therefore will not be considered but any application submitted up to that date will be processed as normal.

The Scottish Government has now published a guide for tenants on what this means for them. It gives general information about their options during the notice period before the Right to Buy ends. The guide and further information is available at the following link:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2014/11/8564>



RENT CONSULTATION

In February, the Board will decide on the rent levels that will apply from next April. Before coming to a decision, it wants to ask you what you think of their proposed increase.

The Board is asking for feedback on whether or not a maximum of £2.40 a week increase for a typical two bedroom house is reasonable. For a typical one bedroom house, the figure would be £2.10 and for a three bedroom house, £2.60. While the final amount may vary slightly depending on your actual current rent the increase will equate to no more than 3% of your current rent. We are hoping that, based on preliminary budgeting there is a reasonable prospect that the actual increase could be lower than 3%.

The Board realises that many tenants continue to face real financial pressures so it is aiming to keep any increase as low as practically possible. However, we have to set rents at a level that allows us to run the association effectively and ensure we can continue to meet the costs of providing good quality services.

Most of the feedback that we receive suggests that most tenants think that their rent payment represents real value for money. They value the quality of their home and our day to day services. So, in consulting on this possible rent rise, the Board's view is that it is important to maintain services at the current standard.

The rent also pays for the longer-term improvements to our houses. On pages 4 & 5 of our Autumn newsletter we provided details about our plans for major improvement works over the next twelve months. Expenditure on our maintenance and repairs programmes this year will amount to almost £1.7 million. Such investment each year ensures that all our houses are maintained to the same high standard and will provide for good quality homes for existing and prospective tenants for many years to come.

The Board has invested in additional money advice and tenancy services which are proving to be of real benefit to many of our tenants. Ayrshire Housing also continues to build new houses to meet the needs of people on our long waiting list. We have though scaled back our ambitions so as not to put any additional pressure on the rents that are charged.

We welcome your comments on the proposed rent increase. Please get in touch by the middle of February. You can speak to your Housing Officer, write to us or email us at info@ayrshirehousing.org.uk.

You can also leave a comment at www.ayrshirehousing.org.uk for others to see. You are also welcome to join our tenants panel to make your feeling known.



ANNUAL GAS SERVICING



We have a legal obligation to carry out an annual gas service on individual properties. During the service our engineers, James Frew (GasSure) will ensure that all gas appliances, flues, gas pipework, smoke and carbon monoxide detectors installed by us are maintained in a safe condition. They will also carry out a visual inspection of your gas cooker, if you have one. The service takes around 30-45 minutes and will ensure that your gas system is working as efficiently as possible so that you use less gas and reduce your gas bills.

When an access appointment is made, please make sure that someone is available to allow entry to the property. If you have a pre-payment meter you must ensure that it is topped up. If you have to cancel your appointment, please contact the office to arrange an alternative at your earliest opportunity.

We have a legal obligation to carry out an annual gas service, if we are unable to gain access to your property we will have to force entry and you will be charged. We would therefore ask that you co-operate to ensure that access is provided for the engineer.

GET READY FOR WINTER!

During the winter season it's important to take the necessary precautions to minimise the risk of frost damage and prevent frozen and burst pipes. If you intend to go away overnight or for a longer period leave your heating on to maintain a reasonable background temperature and ask someone to visit the property regularly.

If you experience frozen pipes:

Turn off the water at the stop valve and **Switch off** gas and electric water heaters.

Remove or protect any possessions that could be damaged by a burst pipe.

Gently heat the frozen section of pipe using a fan heater, hair drier, hot water bottle or heated cloths.

Never use a blow lamp or naked flame.

In the event of severe cold weather resulting in frozen external supply pipes, there is little the association or its contractors can do, especially if there are a lot of burst pipes. If you have access to water for a period, take the opportunity to fill some suitable containers to provide some water should the pipes freeze further.

If you experience burst pipes:

Call the office or the Emergency Repairs Service immediately.

Turn off the water at the stop valve – open all taps to fully drain the system.

Switch off the central heating system/hot water heater if the burst pipe is affecting the heating pipework.

Switch off any electrics affected – switch off the power at the mains if the flooding is extensive.

Warn neighbours who might suffer damage due to a burst especially if you live in an upper floor flat and have other properties below your home.

Minimise damage – if water is coming through the ceiling, put buckets and basins underneath and move items that might be damaged by water. If the ceiling starts to bulge, pierce the plaster to let the water through without the ceiling collapsing.

TENANT LIABILITY: If you fail to take reasonable precautions to prevent burst pipes, you may be held responsible for the damage caused to the property. Your neighbours might also have a claim against you for any damage to their property and contents. Burst pipes can cause considerable damage to your home. Ayrshire Housing's insurance provides cover for the structure and fittings owned by us, this does not cover your contents.

CHRISTMAS COMPETITION

This year throughout our Winter Newsletter we have hidden our Christmas logo! The logo is a green Christmas tree with a red star on top! In order to win the prize, a £20 Marks and Spencer voucher, please answer the following :-

HOW MANY OF OUR CHRISTMAS TREES CAN YOU FIND IN OUR WINTER NEWSLETTER?

The answer will be posted on our website in the New Year and the lucky winner will be drawn from all correct answers received.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

YOUR ANSWER _____



Please return this tear off section to our office at Ayrshire Housing, 119 Main Street, AYR, KA8 8BX before Friday 9th January 2015. Good luck!



STAFF NEWS

AYRSHIRE HOUSING WINS GOLD!

After achieving both Bronze and Silver awards through the Healthy Working Lives Programme, Ayrshire Housing has now been awarded Gold. The award reflects our commitment to promoting a healthier and safer workplace and was presented to members of our Focus Group in November at an Award Ceremony hosted by NHS Ayrshire & Arran. Ayrshire Housing is now part of an elite group of organisations who have achieved this highest accolade.



CONGRATULATIONS!

Congratulations to our receptionist Emma Hamilton (now McRae) who got married at the end of November.



We can supply this document in a print size to suit. It is also available in Braille, audio and other formats, and in other languages. Our website also has several accessibility features which you may find useful.