

Barrhead MATTERS

Barrhead Housing Association



Barrhead Housing Association
Limited
SCOTTISH CHARITY NO. SC 036265

At the heart of our community – investing in your future

SPRING 2020

Rent Increase

This year, the Association undertook various approaches to consulting with our tenants in relation to the options for the rent increase for 2020/21. This included:

- A consultation leaflet issued to all tenants in January and offered a variety of ways to respond with their views in relation to the proposed options – 1.5% or 2.5%.
- Consultation with the Tenant Scrutiny Panel took place in February 2020.
- Staff completed telephone surveys throughout January/February 2020.
- Views were sought when tenants came into the office and also when staff carried out home visits.
- Information was posted on our website, Facebook and Twitter.
- We introduced a Survey Monkey – and then emailed 377 tenants and texted 804 tenants asking them to complete a survey.

A total of 127 responses to the surveys were received. From these responses, 31 (25%) indicated a preference for a 2.5% increase to provide enhanced services, and 96 (75%) were instead in favour of a 1.5%

increase to retain existing levels of service. These results then fed into discussions at our Governing Board meeting held on 27 February 2020, during which the Board agreed to increase rents and service charges by 1.5% from 1st April 2020.

If you pay your rent by standing order, please get in touch with your bank to increase your payment to match the new rent charge. You will find details of your new charge on the rent increase letter which was sent to you in March 2019. Alternatively, you can contact the office. Tel: 0141 881 0638 or email: enquiries@barrheadha.org.

If you pay by direct debit, the Association will change your payments for you and if you receive housing benefit the Association will notify the Council of your new rent charge.



Stop Press...

Barrhead HA's Chief Executive indicates her intention to retire

Shirley Robison, Chief Executive at Barrhead Housing Association since September 2005 has indicated her intention to retire from her current post in September 2020. She said: "Following almost 15 years in this post, I have indicated to the Board and staff team that I have decided to retire from my role. I've enjoyed my time here and we should be proud of what has been achieved – I leave the organisation in a strong and financially secure position. I wish our excellent, dedicated and professional Board and staff team every success for the future".



Universal Credit and Rent Increases – Important Info



If you are on Universal Credit, you must let the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) know about your annual rent increase. You should do this by putting the new figure into your online journal. You can only do this from the date your rent increase comes into effect – 1 April 2020. We can't tell the DWP about your rent rise on your behalf, but if you need help with your journal please speak to our Welfare Rights Officer who will be happy to assist.

How to update your rent increase via your on-line journal from 1st April

Sign in to your Universal Credit online journal at: www.universalcredit.service.gov.uk/sign-in and follow these simple steps:

- Click on 'Report a change of circumstances' – you will see a message asking 'What do you want to tell us about?'

- Click 'Where you live and what it costs'.
- Click the green 'Change' button.
- Click 'Something else' from the two options.
- Add the date (1st April 2020) when you want your rent change to start.
- Add your new rent charge.
- You will get a link from your job coach to upload a copy of your rent increase letter.

Tenant Community Information Event

On Saturday 16th May between 12pm and 2.30pm, we are holding a Tenants and Community Information Fun Day at the Auchenback Resource Centre. There will be a number of family friendly activities including FREE food, face painting, virtual reality headsets and arts and craft. There will also be an opportunity to find more about the Association, including the opportunity to find out more about our: current rent structure, Community Regeneration Strategy, Tenant Participation Strategy and our 5 Year Investment Plan. BHA staff will be on hand to provide further information. Further details to follow.



IN THIS ISSUE NEW BUILD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME • 2020/21 INVESTMENT PRIORITIES • NEW SERVICES – TENANT APP • AND THE WINNERS WERE...

GOT SOMETHING TO SAY? • CONTACT US AT: Tel: 0141 881 0638 • Web: www.barrheadha.org • Email enquiries@barrheadha.org • or follow us on

Format and content of future newsletters

The Association is always looking for ways to improve the way we communicate with our customers. Whilst we are moving towards digital communication methods, many of our customers still say that they like to be kept informed through written communications, such as our quarterly newsletter. So the newsletter is here to stay!

In order to ensure that our newsletter remains relevant and interesting, we are asking our customers to let us know of any suggestions they may have as to how to improve our newsletter – for example, is the (Quarterly) frequency appropriate?...are the articles interesting?...is there anything missing which you would want to see reported more regularly? In fact if you have any suggestions, please contact the office or email our Corporate Services Manager Iain MacLean on iainm@barrheadha.org.



Easter Competition

Children are encouraged to enter into our prize draw and be in with a chance to win a £25 Silverburn Voucher.

A winner for each age category will be picked out from a hat on Friday 17 April 2020, so please make sure all completed entries are returned to our offices no later than **Friday 3 April 2020**. Good luck!



BBQ/Fire Pit Safety

Despite the lousy weather recently, Summer 2020 is actually not too far away so we would like to remind our tenants that the use of BBQ's or fire pits can sometimes cause annoyance to your neighbours, especially if you live in a communal block. So before you fire up your BBQ or fire pit...think of your neighbours. Here are a few things to consider...Does my neighbour have washing out or windows open? Will smoke fill the common close? Is my BBQ/fire pit a safe distance from the house?

We want our tenants to be safe, so please be considerate when the summer weather eventually arrives.

New Build Development Programme



Below you will find further detail of the Association's ongoing development activity.

Neilston Road, Neilston

Working with Taylor Wimpey, the Association will see the completion of 12 new homes in April/May 2020. The new homes consist of the following:

- 4 x 2 bedroomed mid-terraced houses
- 4 x 3 bedroomed end terraced houses
- 2 x 3 bedroomed semi-detached houses

All have back gardens and small front gardens with on-street car parking. In addition to the monthly rent, there will be a share of factoring charges for the whole development. Nine properties will be let by the Association in terms of our allocations policy and three allocated to homeless referrals from East Renfrewshire Council. Enquiries can be made at our office, as applicants must be on our waiting list to be considered.

Blackbyres Road, Barrhead

Working with Belway Homes, the Association will see the completion of ten new homes in early 2021. The location of these homes will be adjacent to the fire station in Grahamston Road but accessed

from Blackbyres Road. The new homes consist of the following:

- 4 x 2 bedroomed mid-terraced houses
- 4 x 3 bedroomed end terraced houses
- 2 x 3 bedroomed semi-detached houses

All have back gardens and small front gardens with on-street parking. In addition to the monthly rent, there will be a small factoring charge for the whole development and allocations will be the same as above.

Dealston Road, Barrhead

Working with AS Homes, the Association will see the completion of eight new homes in 2021, with the site starting summer 2020. The new homes will consist of the following:

- 4 x 2 bedroomed mid-terraced houses
- 4 x 3 bedroomed end-terraced houses

All have back gardens and small front gardens with on-street parking.

Other plans underway include the following: Lyoncross, Barrhead South masterplan – 12 new homes with Avant – due start on-site Spring 2020 and complete next year 2021.

Netherton Farm, Barrhead South masterplan – 25 new homes with Taylor Wimpey – due to start on-site Summer 2021 with completion end of 2022.

Are you currently unemployed and actively seeking work?

The Flexible Support Fund (FSF) is a fund offered by local Jobcentres to help support local need.

It's normally used for customers who start work or attending interviews where they have no funds until first wages are received.

The FSF can be used for:

- Travel expenses
- Childcare costs
- Training courses
- Clothing for interviews
- Uniforms to start work
- Tools for work

There is no exhaustive list of what the FSF can and cannot be awarded for, however this Fund is not open to everyone and applicants need to meet particular eligibility criteria. For example, certain conditionality groups within Universal Credits.

Each application is looked at on its own merits and the first point of contact is to speak to your work coach at your jobcentre for more information as awards are discretionary.



2020/21 Investment priorities...

In our last newsletter we promised an update of our investment priorities for 2020/21. Below you will find further details of what we are planning to spend over the next year on investment in our stock. Further information will follow to those tenants who will be having work carried out to their homes over the coming year. Please contact the office, if you wish further information on what might be planned for your property.



BHA: 2020-21 INVESTMENT PROGRAMME



Complaints Update

The Association continues to welcome feedback from all of our customers who use our services.

In the six months to December 2019, we received a total of 48 complaints. There were 41 Stage 1 complaints and 7 complaints escalated to Stage 2.

The average timescale of complaints resolved at Stage 1 was 3.5 working days against the target of five working days. The average timescale of complaints resolved at Stage 2 was 18.75 days against the target of 20 days.

- 47% of all complaints received were upheld.
- 21% of all complaints received were partially upheld.
- 31% of all complaints received were not upheld.
- 1% of all complaints received are ongoing.

We are always looking at ways in which our services can be improved, and the feedback our customers provide is essential to allow us to evaluate and improve the services available. A full copy of our complaints procedure is available on our website.



New Services – Tenant App and Text Balances

The Association are delighted to announce the launch of our new App which will be available from March 2020. This new Barrhead Housing Association App will allow you to:

- **Report a repair** – quickly enter your details, a brief description of the repair and you can also upload images to help provide more comprehensive information to us.
- **Get our latest news**
- **Obtain a rent account balance immediately**
- **Make a payment** – which is now a very quick and easy process to allow you to pay your rent and links directly to the Allpay site. You will even get an email with a receipt once you have made your payment.
- **Get in touch with us** – fill out simple form which will come directly to us.
- **Access a list of handy contacts** including how to contact our out of hours emergency services.

The app has been designed to be simple and easy to navigate and is available to download via the Google Play Store (Android) and the Apple Store (iOS) devices. Simply go to the appropriate app store, search for Barrhead Housing and download the app. You will be able to find both links on our website.

If you are unsure how to download app's or are looking to develop your digital skills, did you know that East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust offer free Digital Skills Information Sessions? To **FIND OUT MORE**, just contact your local library and ask to book a meeting with a learning advisor at an Information Session.

The other new service we are offering is the ability to find your rent account balance quickly through text. If you wish to register, please contact us straight away and we will make the necessary arrangements to enrol you in this service. By enrolling, you will then be able to text us any time simply by texting **BALANCE** and you will automatically receive a text back providing you with an up-to-date rent balance.

Cyber Security

Cyber security is about organisations like Barrhead HA taking steps to reduce the risk of becoming victims of cyber-attacks. This could be from theft of a device or hacking, or the prevention of unauthorised access to the significant amount of personal data that we hold about our customers.

In order to ensure that we are taking all steps to protect our data, we undertook a full and comprehensive IT refresh in 2018, including a full upgrade of our servers and implementation of a more robust and secure IT system for the Association. We also upgraded our software to monitor the network, track all activity on the network including threats, and deliver continuous updates to maintain strong network defense against cyber criminals and attacks.

We have developed and implemented a comprehensive IT & Electronic Communication Policy; a Disposal Policy; short-term IT strategy; Upgraded our housing system to a current version; established an IT asset register.

Following a subsequent Internal Audit, we identified a further six actions and staff have since undertaken a significant amount of work to review existing practices and put in place systems for those risks identified within the Audit.

In order to further protect the Association, we decided to go through a process of Cyber Essentials Accreditation which is a simple but effective, government backed scheme developed to help protect organisation's against a range of the most common Cyber-attacks. This approach is endorsed by the National Cyber Security Centre, and ensures organisation's can demonstrate to customers, investors, insurers and others that they have taken security measures for essential precautions.

We are pleased to be able to report that we have now successfully secured Cyber Essentials Accreditation. Despite this, we are not being complacent and we have now decided that we will go through the process of Cyber Essentials Plus Accreditation. This is an even more enhanced method of assessment, to ensure we are securely guarded against cyber-attacks and will also demonstrate our commitment to cyber security.

Our customers should be assured therefore that, on an ongoing basis, we are taking all necessary steps to protect our systems, and customers data, from cyber attacks.

Plans for Coronavirus

We are currently working our way through plans to maintain our services to all customers should the Coronavirus affect our tenants and other service users.

We will continue to follow advice from the UK and Scottish Governments and NHS meantime.

Enclosed with this newsletter you will find a letter from our Chief Executive, which provides further information.



Bike Pods

Barrhead Housing Association encourages and supports promotion of cycling as a sustainable travel alternative. Not only is cycling good for the environment but the health benefits of cycling include muscle toning, improved cardiovascular health, and better blood circulation. It is one of the simplest forms of working out and can be done at a low, moderate or high intensity.

We have been successful in applying to Cycling Scotland for funding to install cycle storage pods in some of our properties, where our staff have highlighted cycle storage as being a problem, especially in common closes. The cycle pods are Solid Secure Gold Rating and manufactured from 4-6mm thick medium density polyethylene which is high robust, durable and weatherproof. We have also worked in partnership with Auchenback Active to install a cycle rack at the Auchenback Resource Centre, to allow visitors to travel there sustainably.

The new cycle pods.



Pre-paid envelopes

Just a reminder that, when you receive a pre-paid envelope from Barrhead Housing Association, we have already paid the postage. So there is no need to put a stamp on it too!



And the winners were...

The Association is always looking at ways to improve our repairs service, and feedback from our customers is really important to us to allow us to understand the quality of service we are providing.

A repairs satisfaction survey questionnaire is sent to our customers once a repair has been completed. Returned

Martin Moran



Mr Inglis



surveys are then entered into a prize draw for a £25 store voucher. The most recent winners of the prize draw were **Martin Moran** and **Mr Inglis**.

Following our 2019 Christmas Competition, the winners selected from all the correct entries were **Skye Austin**, **Callum Graham** and **Christine Riddell**.

Callum Graham



Christine Riddell



Connecting Communities

Community members have been developing their digital skills as part of our Connecting Communities Project. Funded by SCVO's Digital Participation Charter Fund, residents at our Sheltered Housing Complex have been learning how to use their phones and tablets, discovering what Android and iClouds are, and searching the internet. There has even been the opportunity to participate in a rocket launch to space and visit Times Square, New York through using a virtual reality head sets. This project has been developed in partnership with East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust, and over the coming months we will be looking at rolling it out into Dunterlie and Auchenback.



2020 Garden Competition

Spring finally seems to be arriving and we will be out and about soon looking for our best kept gardens, backcourts and estates for our 2020 Garden Competition. Whilst there is no need to contact us, we want to make sure that we do not miss any beautiful gardens, so if you want to send us photos of your garden in full bloom, please do so over the coming months to: enquiries@barrheadha.org or via our Facebook page at:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Charity-Organization/Barrhead-Housing-Association-223807407824351/>

Everyone will automatically be entered, and the winners will be announced in a future newsletter and invited along to our AGM to receive their prizes. Good luck!



If you have any comments or complaints to make about any of our services, please contact the office:
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T: 0141 881 0638
E: enquiries@barrheadha.org
W: www.barrheadha.org

