

Tenant Conference



Report



A Report of the ninth North Ayrshire Council Tenant Conference held on Saturday 22nd November 2008 in Seamill Hydro.



**NORTH AYRSHIRE
COUNCIL**

Introduction

North Ayrshire Council's ninth Tenants' Conference was held at the Seamill Hydro Hotel, Seamill on Saturday 22nd November 2008.

The conference was advertised in local press, Area Housing Offices, Library's and in the Tenancy Matters Newsletter. All North Ayrshire Council tenants were invited and 98 people attended the event.

There were 3 workshops held throughout the day and tenants could choose to participate in 2 of these. The workshops focused on Support for Victims of Anti-Social behaviour, the Housing Repairs Policy and Energy Advice.

There was also an information village providing information from various agencies and council Services.

A big brother style diary room featured at the event, providing delegates with the chance to comment on their experiences and expectations as tenants of North Ayrshire.

All tenants were entered into a prize draw and 3 lucky winners received prizes of £30, £15 and £10 in Tesco gift vouchers.

Opening Comments

Tracey Wilson, Tenant Participation Manager opened the conference and thanked everyone for attending before handing over to Councillor David O'Neill for opening comments.



Councillor O'Neill provided a brief outline of the day ahead and detailed the workshops and other activities on offer.

Councillor O'Neill then highlighted the work of the Tenant Conference Working Group who plan and oversee the organisation and topics of the Tenant Conference and noted that some members of the group would be on hand to help throughout the day and were easily identified by "tenant helper" name badges. Councillor O'Neill then handed over to Olga Clayton, Head of Housing & Building Services.

Olga provided delegates with an update from the recent Scottish Housing Regulator Inspection of North Ayrshire Council, Housing Services.

The Regulator looked at various aspects of the service and Olga was pleased to note that the Housing Management section of the inspection had received an 'A' grade and that only one other local authority has received this grade in this area within the last 5 years. Our Services to Homeless People were awarded with a 'B' grade which signifies a good performance and Asset Management & Repairs were awarded with a 'C' grade which is a fair performance.



As we received a 'C' grading for Asset Management and Repairs we are currently developing an improvement plan in consultation with tenants on the Major Works and Repairs Working group. A copy of the improvement plan will also be sent to all Registered Tenants Groups.

The aim of the conference was to:

Increase tenant awareness and understanding of the key elements within the Housing Service and what procedures are in place to further develop and improve the services offered to all of our tenants.

Workshop 1: Repairs



Alex Kirk, Design and Maintenance Manager from North Ayrshire Council Infrastructure & Design Services delivered a workshop on the new repairs policy.

Delegates were provided with a copy of the draft repairs policy and a questionnaire and discussed this document within their groups.

Delegates were also given the opportunity to take the policy home and return any suggestions / comments to the Tenant Participation Team.

A brief summary from the group discussions is noted below:

Question 1: Response Timescales for Carrying out repairs

Generally delegates thought that the new proposed timescales are fair and a vast improvement on current timescales.

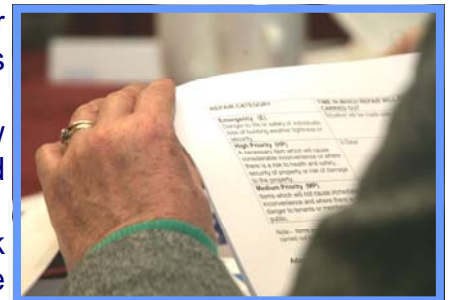
Tenant Suggestions:

- Sheltered and Amenity Housing should be treated with more priority.
- Initial works should be completed to a better / higher standard to prevent future repairs being required.

Question 2: Responsibilities for repairs and repair categories

Tenant Suggestions:

- The majority of delegates felt that the repair of skirting, door and window facings should not be the tenant's responsibility as this is generally due to wear and tear.
- Most delegates felt that within the Doors section that a few repairs which were listed as medium priority should be classed as emergency.
- Incorporate the value of charge applied for letting tenants back into their properties where they lose their keys and advise tenants that they will be charged for using this service.



Question 3: Tenants Responsibilities and Rights

- Tenants agreed that if any damage is caused by the tenant, then it is their responsibility to pay for a repair.
- The majority of tenants felt that where original materials used to do jobs were substandard causing easy wear and tear, the tenant should not have to pay for repairs.

A discussion followed as to whether it was worthwhile charging tenants for repairs and whether this provided value for money.

Question 4: Monitoring and Reporting

Generally delegates felt that monitoring and reporting was worthwhile.

Workshop 2: Support for Victims of Anti Social Behaviour



Pat Kelly, Anti-Social Behaviour Investigation Team Manager opened the session and introduced Susan Boyd, Home Security Officer for North Ayrshire Council and Nicola Merrin, Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator for Victim Support.

Pat then handed over to Susan and Nicola who delivered short presentations to the group.

Home Security Project Susan Boyd



The home security project was set up in 2005 to offer information, advice and assistance to all North Ayrshire residents who suffer from domestic abuse or continuing anti-social behaviour.

The project offers advice and support, referrals to other agencies, stress management information, assistance in improving home security and how to improve personal safety.

In addition the project offer equipment such as: security bars / slip bolts, spy holes, new locks, london bars, window locks, solid core doors / safe rooms, security lighting and community panic alarms.

The project has received a lot of positive feedback and is making a real difference to peoples lives.

Victim Support Nicola Merrin



Victim Support is the leading voluntary organisation set up to help people affected by crime and extends to include help for the friends and family of those affected by crime.

Service Aim:

- To improve the well being of people suffering from Anti-Social Behaviour and Crime.

The support is free of charge and the service is strictly confidential. Victim support staff are trained and accredited to a high standard. The majority of support offered comes from referrals from the Criminal Justice System, however victims and their families will still be able to access help if the crime is not reported.

The team look at the long-term effects on the victim and Nicola noted that in many cases early intervention can stop the need for greater help at a later date. They help people to recognise their feelings and teach them coping mechanisms.

The local area office is located in Irvine and has 3 full time staff, 25 volunteers and 4 trainees who work from the office. Victim support take referrals from various agencies and the Irvine team dealt with approximately 3500 referrals last year. Victim Support also ensure that victims are made aware of other support services that they qualify for.

Workshop 2: Support for Victims of Anti Social Behaviour

Pat then opened the session and encouraged questions and suggestions from the group. Some Feedback and advice from the workshops is noted below:

Advice from Session

- The anti-social behaviour team will guide tenants through all stages when they make a complaint. If complaints are submitted first hand they can be handled better, the best possible evidence can be gathered and the correct questions asked.
- Get an incident number from the police each time that you call.
- Keep a diary of events as evidence for prosecution.
- Statements and evidence in support of the case are essential.
- To date in all of the cases reported there has been no fall back on the victim.
- Not all issues can be resolved by Housing Services, joint agency working is the key to resolving problems
- Common sense, e.g. not walking alone in a dark area at night, having a panic alarm and community design all help in avoiding instances of crime.

Feedback

- One tenant noted that he had used the service and commented that it was excellent. He really appreciated the work that was done.
- Would have preferred to go to Anti Social Behaviour Investigation Team office instead of the local housing office for complaints - they would have been resolved quicker.
- Don't think information on support services is well publicised, thought it was but from the information received today it does not appear to be the case.

Workshop 3: Energy Advice



Stuart Reid and Abbe Shedden from the Energy Saving Scotland Advice Centre facilitated a workshop on Energy Advice.

The workshop discussed heating and lighting in the home and also discussed driving efficiently.

Delegates were provided with a selection of money saving hints and tips and also advised that they could be provided with a free personalised home energy report which could save up to £270 per year on energy bills.

A selection of hints and tips from the workshop are noted below:

Home:

- When fuel price increases are announced, take meter readings immediately to avoid being overcharged for fuel.
- Always check the meter reading on your energy bills compared to the actual reading on the meter.
- Turn your home thermostat down by 1°C to save around £50 per year.
- Turn off lights and appliances when not in use.
- Use economy settings on appliances.
- Use energy saving light bulbs.
- Only boil the water that you need.

Driving:

- Check tyre pressure regularly.
- Avoid short journeys.
- Remove roof racks, bike racks, etc when not in use.
- Check your revs—Change up before 2,500 rpm (Petrol) and 2,000 rpm (Diesel).



Information Village

For the first time North Ayrshire Council Tenants Conference has played host to an Information Village. All delegates were provided with an opportunity to visit the information stalls provided by various agencies. The stalls were as follows:

- Crime Prevention
- Energy Savings Trust
- 1st Alliance Credit Union
- Housing Matters
- Housing Services
- Recycling
- Repairs Matters
- SACRO
- Saltire Facilities Management Ltd.
- Strathclyde Fire & Rescue
- Tenant Participation
- The Mill Group
- Trading Standards
- Welfare Rights
- Working Links
- Young Scot / Dialogue Youth

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the stand holders who helped make this event a success.

Diary Room

We were delighted to have the Mill Group along to our conference. They facilitated our Big Brother style Diary Room, where delegates were given the opportunity to make any relevant comments and answer questions on a number of topics. A DVD has been produced from the event, more information on this can be obtained by contacting the Tenant Participation Team.

Ideas for future events:

Tenants were asked to provide ideas for topics of discussion for future events and conferences. The ideas submitted are detailed below:

- House Letting
- Just keep the topics relevant, factual and speakers well informed

Housing Services really appreciate the input from all tenants and residents which helped make this conference a success.

We would also like to take this opportunity to extend our thanks and appreciation to the Tenant Helpers who helped to arrange and facilitate this event.

Feedback

We provided all delegates with Event Assessment forms and Comment cards within their delegate packs, 20 people returned forms and a summary of the feedback received follows throughout the next few pages:

The table below illustrates the percentage of people who rated different aspects of the day as excellent, very good, good, ok, poor or very poor.

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	OK	Poor	Very Poor
Presentation: Relevance	35 %	45 %	10 %	10 %	0 %	0 %
Presentation: Speakers	33 %	50 %	17 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Presentation: Discussion	38 %	50 %	6 %	6 %	0 %	0 %
Workshop: Relevance	28 %	44 %	16 %	6 %	6 %	0 %
Workshop: Speakers	40 %	46 %	7 %	7 %	0 %	0 %
Workshop: Discussion	29 %	50 %	14 %	0 %	7 %	0 %
Venue: Facilities	50 %	20 %	10 %	20 %	0 %	0 %
Venue: Location	47 %	16 %	26 %	11 %	0 %	0 %
Venue: Catering	56 %	17 %	5 %	22 %	0 %	0 %
Agenda	50 %	35 %	15 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Information Pack	48 %	42 %	5 %	5 %	0 %	0 %
Registration Process	53 %	37 %	10 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Staff	69 %	26 %	5 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Transport (if required)	54 %	31 %	8 %	8 %	0 %	0 %
Special Requirements (if requested)	75 %	25 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %

Comments

Tenants were then asked to comment on the overall event and to provide ideas for future events. Tenant responses have been summarised in the tables below:

What you least liked about the conference	NAC Housing Services Response
There was a lot of noise between 2 of the 3 workshops.	We do appreciate that there was a lot of noise during the morning session between 2 of the 3 workshops, we sincerely apologise for the inconvenience caused and in order to resolve this problem we moved a workshop to another venue for the afternoon session. It is difficult to find a suitable venue for this event within North Ayrshire, however we will strive to find the most appropriate venue for our requirements.
It would have been useful to have the Housing Repairs Policy sent to delegates prior to conference.	Unfortunately due to time constraints within the service the Repairs Policy was not available to be distributed to delegates before the event. We will however bear this in mind for future events. On the day delegates were provided with feedback forms and freepost envelopes in order to submit their suggestions on improving the policy.

What you **MOST** liked about the conference

- 2 Good Speeches from 2 very intelligent people who know.
- Venue — Always very good
- Staff very good at getting through to tenants.
- Bus driver, very nice and polite — staff great
- Worth while.
- Afternoon workshop was infinitely better — thanks.

You can get this newsletter in other formats, such as Braille or audio tape, and in community languages

ਇਹ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ, ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਅਤੇ ਆਡੀਓ ਟੇਪ 'ਤੇ ਰਿਕਾਰਡ ਹੋਇਆ ਵੀ ਮੰਗ ਕੇ ਲਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ।

本文件也可應要求，製作成其他語文或特大字體版本，也可製作成錄音帶。

Na życzenie klienta, informacje te mogą być udostępnione w innych językach oraz formatach

درخواست پر یہ دستاویز دیگر زبانوں میں، بڑے حروف کی چھپائی اور سننے والے لے ذرائع پر بھی پیش ہے۔