



**Customer Service examined**  
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NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

# Tenancy matters

THE MAGAZINE FOR NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL TENANTS

SEPTEMBER 2010 / ISSUE 27



Approved by tenants for tenants and it's FREE

## WELCOME CHECKS

Vital surveys for health and standards  
SEE P5 ▶

This document is available in other formats such as audiotape, CD, Braille, and in large print. It can also be made available in other languages, on request.

ਇਹ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਮਿਲ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਸੁਣਨ ਵਾਲੀ ਟੇਪ 'ਤੇ, ਸੀ ਡੀ 'ਤੇ, ਬ੍ਰੇਲ ਅਤੇ ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ ਵਿਚ। ਮੰਗ ਆਉਣ 'ਤੇ ਇਹ ਹੋਰ ਬੋਲੀਆਂ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ।

یہ دستاویز دیگر شکلوں میں بھی دستیاب ہے، جیسے اڈیو ٹیپ، سی ڈی، بریل اور بڑے حروف کی چھپائی میں۔ درخواست کرتے پر یہ دستاویز دیگر زبانوں میں بھی مہیا کی جاسکتی ہے۔

該文件還有其他形式，如語音磁帶、CD、盲文版本及大字體版本。如有需求，還提供其他語言版本。

Ten dokument jest do uzyskania w różnych formatach: na taśmie dźwiękowej, płycie CD, brajlem i dużym drukiem. Na żądanie, można go także otrzymać w innych e otrzymać w innych wersjach językowych.

## WELCOME TO TENANCY MATTERS

SEPTEMBER 2010/ISSUE 27

Members of the *Tenancy Matters* Working Group would like to welcome you to this autumn edition of the magazine.



The group, consisting of tenants and officers, held a meeting in July to discuss articles which were submitted for this edition.

There are a number of stories to look out for, including the Scottish Social Housing Charter road shows and advice on using fireworks.

Anyone wishing to participate in our meetings, which involve lively discussion with friendly tenants, can contact the Tenant Participation Team on 01294 471501 or [tenantparticipation@north-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:tenantparticipation@north-ayrshire.gov.uk)

New members and ideas are always welcome and a cup of tea and a scone are provided at meetings. Transport can also be provided.

The group is looking forward to the Neighbourhood Awards ceremony and would like to wish everyone good luck.

# Hot tips on fuel savings

## Energy

Many people find it difficult to heat their homes, particularly during winter time. We know that you may be having difficulty paying your energy bills. That's where the Home Energy Advice Team (HEAT) can help you.

It gives independent advice to North Ayrshire Council, Cunninghame Housing Association and ANCHO tenants in targeted areas who are worried about the cost of heating their home.

Trained advisers give free impartial advice on:

- How to save money on your fuel bills (including energy saving tips and showing how bills are worked out)
- Low tariffs and switching suppliers
- How to access low-cost financial



services through 1st Alliance Credit Union

- The different ways you can pay for your fuel.

They can also show you how to use your heating controls, do a benefit check to see if you are getting everything you are entitled to, and refer you to other agencies, if required. □



**For telephone advice or to arrange a home visit, contact HEAT Monday to Friday, 9.30am-4.30pm on 01294 475690.**

## DID YOU KNOW?

**North Ayrshire Council's Tenancy Support service can provide support to council tenants who:**

- Are having problems managing their tenancy
- Are at risk of becoming homeless
- Have been homeless in the past.

**Contact the team on 01294 601723 or ask for a referral at any local housing office.**



Please recycle this magazine

## Week of the customer

### Events

North Ayrshire Council will be holding a series of events to mark National Customer Service week, which

runs from 4-10 October.

A number of events are currently being planned to demonstrate how important providing the best service possible is to both employees

and customers.

Residents will be encouraged to provide feedback on any aspect of Council service by calling 0845 603 0596. Comments will be passed to the relevant departments and used to inform future changes where appropriate.

Customer-focused training opportunities will also be provided to staff throughout the week on a variety of subjects.

If you contact the Council during the week, you might find your enquiry being handled by one of the Senior Managers participating in the "Back to the Floor" initiative. □



Staff will be trained during the week

# Service improves

## Mystery shopping looks at levels of customer service

Housing Services' has used Mystery Shopping to improve the level of service for tenants.

In spring this year we carried out a further mystery shopping exercise within Housing Services and Building Services.

Eleven tenant volunteers were trained to observe, evaluate and report on the customer service and advice given by staff.

Posing as customers they carried out a series of agreed tasks that tested our service standards, customer care, staff knowledge and how well information was provided on a range of enquiries.

An evaluation questionnaire after each "shop" allowed them to tell us about their experiences in a detailed and objective way. The results are...



### Housing Office

- 100% of calls were answered within six rings (up 13%\*)
- 98% of staff stated the name of their Housing Office (up 5%\*)
- 96% felt that staff were polite, respectful and helpful (down 4%)

### Repairs Service

- 100% of staff stated the proper salutation
- 90% of shoppers were

satisfied with the outcome of their enquiry

- 100% of callers felt that staff were polite, respectful and helpful

### Community Wardens

- 100% of calls were answered within six rings
- 82% of staff gave the name of their office
- 100% of callers felt that staff were polite, respectful and helpful

### Homelessness Service

- 100% of calls were answered within six rings
- 90% of staff gave their name
- 100% of shoppers were satisfied with the outcome of their enquiry

### What next?

Overall, the results are positive, but they did identify some areas for improvement, such as lack of consistency in response to certain enquiries. The reports provide valuable information and recommendations that will help us target the areas we need to work on.



**For a copy of the full report, contact the Tenant Participation team on 01294 471501**

**\*Shows a comparison with the Mystery Shopping exercise in March 2008.**

## Switch on to TV event

The digital TV switchover is the process of turning off the UK's analogue TV signal and replacing it with a digital signal.

Digital UK is hosting a series of road

shows and will visit locations across North Ayrshire in 2010. So, why not go along. You can find out when you switch and more about your digital TV options, put your questions to special

advisors and find out more about the Switchover Help Scheme. The road shows in North Ayrshire will take place in September:

- 13th at 10am-noon, Walker Hall, Kilbirnie
- 14th at 3-5pm, Ardrossan Civic Centre
- 16th at 10am-noon, Irvine Volunteer Rooms
- 17th at 10am-noon, Brisbane Centre, Largs
- 17th at 1-3pm, Dalry Community Centre
- 21st at 1-3pm, Ardeer Community Centre, Stevenston



- 21st at 4-6pm, Whitehirst Park Community Centre, Kilwinning.

# Speak out against domestic abuse



Above: representatives of the North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership sign up to the White Ribbon Campaign Scotland

## Campaign

North Ayrshire Community Planning Partners and guests have signed up to a campaign that gives men a chance to speak out against domestic abuse.

Representatives of the North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership were joined by local celebrity and ex-footballer Gordon Smith to pledge their support for the White Ribbon Campaign Scotland.

Members of community organisations and local

football clubs have also signed up and more than 50 men recently attended a White Ribbon curry night at Ardrossan Rugby Club in support of the campaign.

They were joined by Glasgow Warriors and Scotland international rugby stars Chris Cusiter, Johnnie Beattie and Kelly Brown. □



**For more information on the campaign, visit [www.whiteribbon-scotland.org.uk](http://www.whiteribbon-scotland.org.uk)**

## Your views are vital!

North Ayrshire Council is committed to listening to tenants and acting on their views.

To help meet this objective, we have commissioned an independent market research company to undertake a customer satisfaction survey on our behalf. The survey asks

for your views on the services that we provide for you, and your satisfaction with your home and neighbourhood.

Interviewers will be contacting a number of tenants and carrying out interviews over the next few months. We would like to thank everyone for their co-operation.

The results will be revealed in a future issue of *Tenancy Matters*. □

Stay safe during firework and bonfire season with this vital advice

# Be a brig

## Safety

Traditionally, the run up to 5 November sees a rise in the numbers of bonfires and rubbish fires attended by Strathclyde Fire & Rescue.

With this increase in calls comes an increase in the potential for injuries to members of the public, particularly children.

Strathclyde Fire and Rescue's advice is that to maximise enjoyment and reduce the risk of injury, members of the public should attend an organised public fireworks display.

**If you do decide to have a firework display yourself, always follow the firework code.**

## If you light a bonfire, then:

- Site well away from buildings and fireworks
- Before lighting, check that there is nothing hiding inside it
- Build it so that it will not collapse
- Never use flammable liquids
- Don't burn foam-filled furniture, aerosols or tins of paint or bottles
- Keep everyone away from the fire at all times
- Keep buckets of water, the garden hose or a fire extinguisher ready and pour water on the embers before leaving.



**For advice on how to plan and get permission for a public display, contact Trading Standards on 01294 324950.**



# ht spark

## Vital facts on being safe and following laws

### Fireworks

- Anyone under 18 in possession of fireworks in a public place can be fined £80.
- It is illegal to set off fireworks in a public place unless it is an authorised firework display.
- The penalty for setting off fireworks in a public place can be a fine up to £5,000 or possible imprisonment for up to six months.

### Bonfires

- Bonfire smoke can contain up to 350 times more cancer causing substances than cigarette smoke.
- Smoke from bonfires can obscure visibility on nearby roads.
- It is an offence to burn plastic, rubber and painted materials.

## Surveys to spot asbestos in homes

### Safety checks

North Ayrshire Council has introduced a policy on dealing with asbestos in its housing stock.

The policy was drafted to supplement the leaflet *Asbestos in Housing – Advice to Tenants* and the information contained in the Tenant Handbook.

Under the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2006, the Council is required to manage asbestos only in common areas, such as closes.

The management of asbestos means investigating and recording its presence, drafting and carrying out plans or proposals to leave it in place, label it, encapsulate it, or remove it. The Council has no obligation to manage asbestos



within dwellings themselves.

However, the Council believes that it is important to inform our tenants about it. Surveys are being carried out on all Council homes and it is important that the surveyors gain access to your home for this purpose.

For more details, get the leaflet *Asbestos in Housing – Advice to Tenants* from your local housing office. Also, turn to page 48 of the Tenant's Handbook. □

### DID YOU KNOW?

The quietest times to call the 24-hour Repairs Contact Centre on 0800 0196 444 is before 8am and after 6pm?

## Check for standards

North Ayrshire Council has appointed the John Martin Partnership to undertake a condition survey of all our housing stock.

The information gathered will be used to ensure our housing stock is kept in good condition over the next 30 years.

It is important that a survey is carried out in every home.

It takes approximately 45 minutes to complete and all the surveyors have proper identification.

If you have not yet had a survey carried out, you can arrange an appointment for a surveyor to visit you at a suitable time by calling the John Martin Partnership on 0800 917 9295. □

**DID YOU KNOW?**

The Rent Deposit Scheme is hosting a Landlord Forum in Greenwood Teachers Centre on 30 September from 2pm-4.30pm. For more information on the event, please contact 01294 314700.

**CLOSED**

## Offices shut, but just for a while

Please note that all Housing Service Offices will be closed to the public from 1.30pm on the following dates for staff training and development on the following Thursdays:

- 9 September
- 14 October
- 11 November
- 9 December.

The last Tenants' Conference was a roaring success, and the next could be even better, so book now!

# A great get-together

## Event

North Ayrshire Council held its 12th twice-yearly Tenants' Conference on Friday 4 June at the Menzies Hotel in Irvine.

This high-profile, informative and interactive event welcomed speakers from the Scottish Government, Capita Symonds and Saltire, as well as our very own tenants.

More than 90 delegates attended the event. They were able to ask questions, report a housing or repair issue and have a look around the popular information village.

A report of the event is available by contacting the Tenant Participation Team on 01294 471501 or



tenantparticipation@north-ayrshire.gov.uk

The next Tenants' Conference will take place on **Saturday 6 November 2010**.

It's a free event, but places are limited, so book soon. All North Ayrshire Council tenants and members of Tenants and Residents Associations

are invited to attend. Those who come along will be able to participate in a number of different workshops.

Once again, we will be organising creche facilities, can help with transport and will cater for your dietary requirements, on request. □



➔ To ensure you don't miss out, or if you would like further information, call the Tenant Participation Team on 01294 471501. Alternatively, complete the postcard enclosed in this issue of *Tenancy Matters*.

## Charter hits the road

### Consultation

The Scottish Government will be holding a series of road shows across the country to seek the views of tenants and stakeholders on the

Scottish Social Housing Charter.

The road show for Region 7 (West Strathclyde) will take place at Abercorn Centre, Reid Kerr College, Paisley, on Wednesday 6 October.

North Ayrshire Council also plans

on hosting a number of road shows to allow tenants and Registered Tenant Organisations to have their say on the Charter. □



**For more information, please contact the Tenant Participation Team on 01294 471501.**



## Talk about housing...

### Strategy

During 2010 the new North Ayrshire Local Housing Strategy (2011-2016) will be developed. It will explain how the Council and partners will ensure there is sufficient affordable housing across North Ayrshire, and that issues such as homelessness, housing support and fuel poverty are addressed.

We want to make sure the strategy is relevant to local people and addresses the issues that local people face. Therefore, we are holding a free-of-charge event on Friday

10 September 2010 at Seamill Hydro, Seamill, to provide you with a forum to talk to us. To help you attend we can help you with travel arrangements, childcare and will cater for your dietary requirements.

The event is expected to run from 10am-3pm with lunch included. During the event we want to hear your views on investment, sustainability, accountability and rural areas.



**If you are interested in attending the event, contact Caroline on 01294 324031.**

## Dates for your diary

- 10 September – Local Housing Strategy Forum
- 6 November – North Ayrshire Tenants Conference

### DID YOU KNOW?

**The Council was unable to access more than 6% of properties to carry out various types of repairs or improvements for the period 1 April 2010 – 30 June 2010? We completed 10,053 jobs, but had no access for 623 jobs over this period.**

## You said, we did!

Your feedback is really important to us; whether it's good or bad we want to know. The following shows how we respond to what you tell us. We also include a compliment from a tenant...

- In the feedback from the last Tenant Satisfaction Survey, you said that *Tenancy Matters* newsletter was the most preferred method of keeping tenants informed. So we will continue to use the newsletter to inform and communicate with our tenants.



- 43% of tenants said dog fouling was a major problem in their area. So we promoted

responsible dog ownership in the December 2009 issue of *Tenancy Matters* and will continue to promote and raise awareness of this in future editions.



**If you have any feedback for us, we want to hear from you. Please send your comments or feedback to the Tenant Participation Team, FREEPOST RRUH-BAUB-AYLJ, 1 Main Street, Stevenston KA20 3AB. Alternatively, you can send an email to [tenantparticipation@north-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:tenantparticipation@north-ayrshire.gov.uk)**

## Fantastic feedback!

**Here is a compliment received from a new tenant:**

"I was recently offered a Council house and I was so impressed by the way the staff were so nice and helpful.

"The whole aspect of moving into the house was effortless as the staff made it easy. I want to thank them once again for all their help and support."

# Get help with childcare



## Employment support

Do you want to go back to work, but have a childcare problem? North Ayrshire's Working for Families team could help you find the solution.

Friendly advisers offer free advice and support to parents looking for work, including help with job searches and CVs.

Last year, the Working for

Families team (pictured) helped 148 parents to gain employment, 93 parents to improve their job and 16 parents to attend a training course.

This year, it could be you.



**Phone the team today for an appointment at a venue that suits you on 01294 225169.**

Planting time is round the corner, says Countryside Liaison Officer Tom Armstrong

# Go from bulbs to blooms



## Gardening

September and October is the best time of year to plant bulbs such as daffodils, crocuses, tulips, hyacinths, snowdrops (galanthus), and some rockery bulbs

such as grape hyacinths and the fritillarias.

If you are buying bulbs loose make sure there is no stem growth.

Any bulb that is soft, small and light compared with other similar species shouldn't be selected and any signs of mould indicate a diseased species. The bigger and heavier the bulb, the better.

When planting outside,

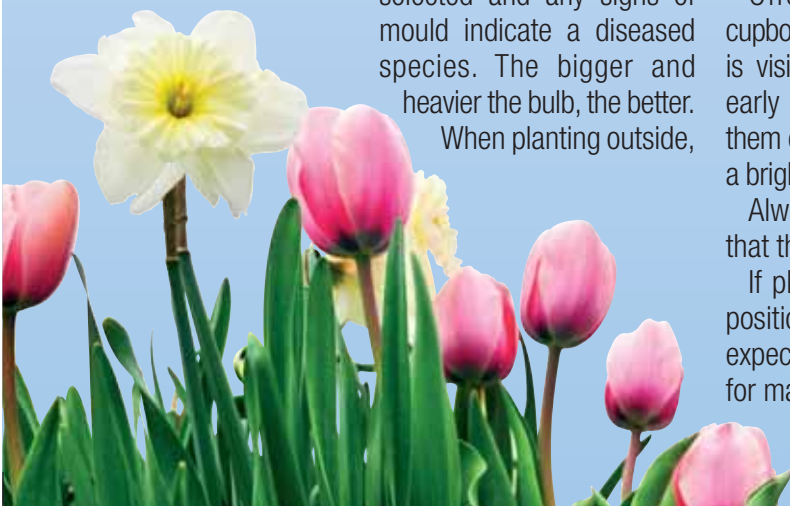
bury the bulb twice the depth of the size of bulb, ensure the soil is well drained and the bulb has plenty of room to develop.

If you don't have a garden you can still plant bulbs into pots and store them indoors.

Choose a cool dark cupboard and leave till growth is visible in late winter/very early spring before taking them out and placing them in a brighter room.

Always ensure, however, that they don't dry out.

If planted in a permanent position, most bulbs can be expected to flower annually for many years to come.



## Contact us



Useful contacts to keep you in touch

### Area Housing Offices

**Ardrissan**  
01294 605258

**Beith & Dalry**  
01294 835355

**Dreghorn**  
01294 221860

**Irvine**  
01294 324870

**Kilbirnie**  
01505 685177

**Kilwinning**  
01294 552261

**Largs**  
01475 687590

**Saltcoats**  
01294 602611

**Stevenson**  
01294 605281

### Other useful numbers

**Repairs Contact Centre**

0800 0196 444  
(24 hours)

**Tenant Participation Team**  
01294 471501

**Tenancy Support**  
01294 601723

**Homelessness Assessment Prevention & Advice**

0800 0196 500

**Cleansing Hotline**  
0845 603 0594

(including special uplifts/general enquiries/litter/recycling)

### Website

www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk